

ugvm

The uk.games.video.misc Magazine

RETRO SPECIAL!



Super Mario World 2:

Yoshi's Island

Issue 03

Inside

CHANNEL F

The console you never knew about

FACING THE DARK SIDE

Converting to the C64 after all these years

TOP REVIEWS

No less than 17 pages of classics and not-so-classics

BEYOND THE BALROG

The evolution of Text Adventures. Go North!

BLURRED VISION

Inferior Gameboy or missed opportunity?

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...ever alert for the call to action!

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Issue 03

Welcome



...to this very special Retro issue of **ugvm!** You wouldn't see any high street magazines devoting an entire issue to old games, would you?

Starting off, we have a cracking review of what can only be described as the greatest 2D platform game ever, **SMW2: Yoshi's Island**. One of Nintendo's last big SNES games, and probably it's best. Add to that a further **14 pages** of Retro Reviews, taking in loads of 8 and 16-bit machines.

Features this issue include **The Evolution of Text Adventures** - a look at where they started and where they are now, a hardware report on the forgotten handheld console and almost-Gameboy the **Quickshot Supervision**, and the (short) life of the pre-Atari 2600 **Channel F** games machine.

As you can see, it's one hell of an issue, and once again, it's even **bigger** than the last one! Set faces to stunned, Mr. Reader...

deKay (Editor)

What's Inside This Issue...



Cover Story

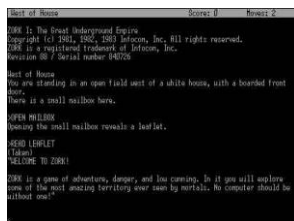
Yoshi's Island: The best 2D game known to man?
Page 20



Channel F

You have no idea what it is - prepare to be told...
Page 6

Beyond The Balrog



The Evolution of Text Adventures
Page 9

The Dark Side

Was the grass greener with the C64 than with the Spectrum?
Page 12



Blurred Vision



The Quickshot Supervision - not such a Game Boy
Page 33

Review Scores Explained

ugvm uses a marks-out-of-5 system for scoring games in the reviews. We feel that percentage systems are silly, with there being little difference between, say 75 and 76%. Marks out of 10 are often pointless as well, as very rarely do games score under 5 or 6/10. Having 5 points to the scale lets us get down to the nitty-gritty: is this game any good, or is it just a pile of old pants?

You can think of the scores as being roughly equivalent to these simple to digest phrases:

1/5 - "Not even worth a look"

2/5 - "Only think about it if you're a real fan of this type of game"

3/5 - "Average. Probably still playable, but not the best of it's kind"

4/5 - "A good game, perhaps with just one or two minor flaws"

5/5 - "You need to own this game. Now."



Awards

Games which score 4/5 also gain the coveted **ugvm Silver Award**, and games achieving the top marks of 5/5 are awarded the even more fantastic **ugvm Gold Award**. These awards are to show that these games really are something you want to play.



Comment

Back In The Day

Neil Fletcher remembers when all this were nowt but fields...

We all agree that games were better "back in the day". I mean, it's obvious. The consoles were nowhere near as powerful, with primitive controls, sound and (dare I say it) graphics. The developers had to concentrate on the gameplay and boy did they get it right! Spending hours as a young boy, sweaty palms contorted into un-natural shapes by my Atari joystick, frantically flapping the wings of my ostrich in Joust. Shouting at your mates when they shot all the food in Gauntlet! Those were the days...

Or were they? Retro gaming is a fantastic hobby for the selected few, those that are reliving their childhood days and revelling in how good gaming used to be. Show a retro game to one of the Linkin Park generation, they scoff with laughter and we dismiss them as graphic whores. In many cases however, they are right. Retro gaming allows us to pick the cream of the crop, the games that stand up to the test of time. Elite, 1942, Joust. However, there are thousands of games out there and most of them are dire.

Retro gaming is "a good thing" - just make sure you've taken off the rose tinted specs if you want to convince the current generation that it was better...

Contents

Regulars

| | |
|--------------------|----|
| Editorial | 2 |
| Comment | 3 |
| News | 4 |
| Reviews | 16 |
| Seaman Diary | 34 |
| My Top 5 | 36 |
| Letters | 38 |
| Hold The Back Page | 40 |
| Next Issue | 40 |

Features

| | |
|----------------------|----|
| Change The Channel | 6 |
| Beyond The Balrog | 9 |
| Facing The Dark Side | 12 |
| Blurred Vision | 33 |

Reviews

| | |
|--|----|
| Power Drive (SNES) | 16 |
| Super Hang On (MD) | 17 |
| Renegade (Spec) | 18 |
| Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy (CPC) | 19 |
| Yoshi's Island (SNES) | 20 |
| Carrier Command (Amiga) | 23 |
| Haunted House (2600) | 24 |
| 3D Monster Maze (ZX81) | 24 |
| Ghostbusters (Spec) | 25 |
| Marble Madness (NES) | 26 |
| Blockout (MD) | 27 |
| Lotus Esprit (Amiga) | 28 |
| Run Baby Run (Spec) | 30 |
| Columns (MD) | 31 |
| Spindizzy (CPC) | 31 |
| Wings (Amiga) | 32 |

ugvm News

What we've been getting excited about in the ugvm newsgroup...

GBA on Your GC

Just as **ugvm** was nearing completion, news came in from Nintendo about a great new add-on for the Gamecube: the Gameboy Player. Remember the Super Gameboy for the SNES? The thing that basically allowed you to play Gameboy games on your TV screen? Well, the Gameboy Player is just like that, only more so. Featuring the ability to play Gameboy Advance games, it also improves over the Super Gameboy in several other ways.

As Nintendo points out: "The Game Boy Player accommodates several novel forms of game play. With the Game Boy or Game Boy Advance game cartridge inserted in the Game Boy Player [which plugs into the bottom of the GC], a regular Nintendo GameCube controller or WaveBird wireless controller can direct the action. Or, using the Nintendo GameCube Game Boy Advance link cable (sold separately), the Game Boy Advance becomes the controller. The Game Boy Player also supports multiplayer action via Game Boy Advance Link



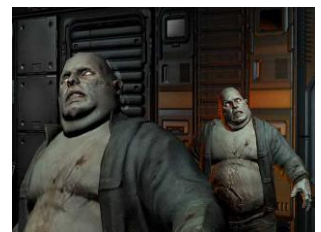
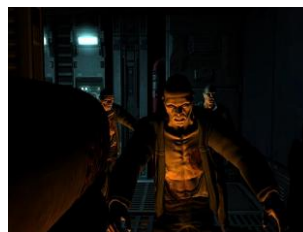
Cables. Player one sees the action on the TV screen while other players view the screens on their linked Game Boy Advance systems."

It's certainly a solution to two problems - the first being the difficult-to-see GBA screen, and the other being the need to buy two GBAs for two player games. The Gameboy Player will launch in Japan in March 2003, and is expected to cost the equivalent of about £40. A bargain, if you ask us.

Doom III Leaked

If you know where to look, you can now find a supposedly leaked version of id Software's long awaited third Doom game available to download on the evil Internet. It is not 100% clear where this unfinished beta version of Doom III has appeared from, but p2p software users have been spreading it across the world almost as quickly as kids rushed to the cinemas to see the latest Harry Potter flick. If you want it (and we're not telling you where it is), then prepare for a hefty 500Mb+ monster download.

As far as the game itself goes, players seem to be split right down the middle as to whether or not it's actually any good. Perhaps if they wait until the final version is out before deciding?



News in brief

New handhelds from Nokia and Ericsson

In a natural progression from the latest generation of Java-enabled phones, Nokia and Ericsson have independently announced that they've developed handheld consoles including mobile phone capability. With such big players about to enter the market, Nintendo may be facing the first serious competition they've had for years. Pokémon Advance would be a good thing at this time, guys.

Xbox Live Beta Launches

If you look in ugv.xbox, you'll see little else. Microsoft's online service is being trialled in the UK, and initial impressions are very positive indeed. The service will launch properly next March, and the number of online games available by then should be significant.

uk.games.computer.misc

While uk.games.video.misc is all very well, there's a definite lack of somewhere for PC gamers to talk about stuff specific to their platform. To counter this, a sister group, uk.games.computer.misc, is currently

under discussion in uk.net.news.config, and should be voted on or fast-tracked any time now. Look for announcements...

Isketch

An old favourite was resurrected this month, with many logging onto <http://www.isketch.net> for the first time for some online videogame-themed Pictionary. One ugv* regular, Paul, was ever-present, posting a message about every six hours asking for people to play with him. He's not been heard from recently - maybe he's in rehab?

FairPlay Week Draws Closer

Debate about the whole FairPlay thing has now been raging in the newsgroup for two months. If you're unaware of what it is, then you might want to have a look at the FairPlay Campaign site. The underlying aim of the campaign is to reduce the cost of games. If you don't buy any games in the week between 1st and 8th December this year (one of the busiest weeks for videogames sales due to the imminence of Christmas), then you will be supporting FairPlay and, in theory, sending a message to games manufacturers to that effect.

www.fairplay-campaign.co.uk

Although almost everyone seems to want cheaper videogames (well, who wouldn't?) it is felt by some that the arguments behind the requested price drop are flawed. More news of the outcome of the event in the next issue of **ugvm**.



Vice City Mania

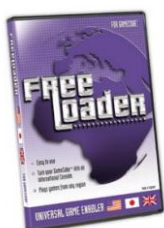
Just in case you'd completely failed to notice, which if you have a PS2, you haven't, the latest Grand Theft Auto game "Vice City" was released this month. Looks like more than a few of you went out and bought it too, judging from the huge number of sales.



All the Playstation groups (and even many non-PS groups) are positively overflowing with posts on this subject, most of them being praise. You violent lot.

www.rockstargames.com/vicacity

No Freeloading



Well, not yet anyway. It looks as though the Dattel Freeloader has been delayed once more, with a new release date of "December". Place your bets!

Nintendo Fined £95m

In the heady days of the NES and SNES, Nintendo illegally restricted the movements of games between EU countries. The EU has fined the company £95m for this. However, note that the UK was actually one of the cheaper countries to buy games in at the time - a fact that anyone who bought Street Fighter 2 for £70 might baulk at.

Xbox Loses Millions

Figures out this month from Microsoft show that their Home and Entertainment division (of which the Xbox is a part) lost a staggering \$177m (about £115m) in the last quarter. This is mainly due to the aggressive price point of the Xbox, which is currently retailing in the UK for around £160 with two games, despite the fact it costs Microsoft approximately \$325 (£215) a unit to manufacture.



It is not new news that Microsoft are making a loss on the console, since this is par for the course with gaming hardware. The Gamecube and Playstation 2 are also both sold at a loss, albeit a smaller one than the Xbox. The shortfall is always expected to be made up in software sales, from which the console manufacturers get a cut..

Unfortunately, the Xbox has not caught on as well as Bill Gates would have hoped, with abysmal sales in Japan, and the general dominance of the Playstation 2 worldwide. Microsoft will not be giving up, however, and it's not like they don't have enough money to carry the Xbox even if the picture becomes even more grim. Perhaps the Xbox Live will help sales.

Each issue, **ugvm** looks at a console from the past. There's no way that anyone could possibly hope to own each and every gaming machine ever released - not even the BFI's got there yet, and they've been trying for years. This article should carry a health warning therefore: reading about other consoles could seriously damage your wallet.

Change the Channel

This issue, **Tim Miller** does the retro thing and looks at the system that started it all.

Quickly, pop quiz... which system started it all? The Atari 2600? Nope. Intellivision? Odyssey? Vectrex? Nope. Pong? Well, yes, and no.

Travel back to July 1976. Before I was born, in fact. The home video games market is a big and growing industry, with countless manufacturers making systems that plug into your TV and let you play Pong, or some variant of it. If you want to play a videogame at home, you buy a Pong machine, and you like it.

Of course, nobody can afford to risk anything new - innovation is pretty much dead. To release a game, you have to release it as a package which will cost the consumer £100, and who'll buy something for £100 when they don't know if it'll be any good? The consumer knows where they are with Pong.

Back to the present, and we now know that behind the scenes something was being developed which would revolutionise the videogaming industry, and it is this which can be thought to "have started it all". The Fairchild Camera and Instrument Corporation had engineers working with the then-new technology of microprocessors to develop a system which could play different types of game. The console would feature plug-in cartridges which would hold processor

code, instead of being simply hardwired. This would necessitate a change in the way games were written, but it would mean that the consumer wasn't reduced to just playing Pong.

Note that the Channel F wasn't the first console to feature cartridges - the Odyssey had done that four years before. However, the Odyssey's cartridges (often referred to as 'cards' instead) only contained a set of hard-wired jumper leads to make the console play different games that were already stored in the base unit.

Very little is known about who developed the machine within the company, or who conceived it, or who approved it (although the engineer Jerry Lawson is most associated with the project). Whatever; in August 1976, the Fairchild Video Entertainment System was launched in the US. The console cost \$169.95, and the games cost \$19.95 each. It was a moderate success over the Christmas season, despite its relatively complicated use (for example, to play a game you had to turn the TV and console on, then insert a cartridge, then press the reset button). Fairchild's vision of a console with a long shelf-life seemed to be a good one.

Further Contacts

Very little is available on the Internet about the Channel F, unfortunately. It is sometimes discussed on rec.games.video.classic, but it's not a console that's easily loved.

Channel F FAQ: <http://www.digitpress.com/faq/channelf.htm>

Some brochures showing just how exciting it can be:

<http://www.oriolenet.net/~rworne/chf/chf1.jpg>

<http://www.oriolenet.net/~rworne/chf/chf2.jpg>

<http://www.oriolenet.net/~rworne/chf/chfbro1.jpg>

<http://www.oriolenet.net/~rworne/chf/chfbro2.jpg>

Technical gubbins on the Channel F's processor, the F8:

http://www.nyx.net/~lturner/public_html/Fairchild_F8.html

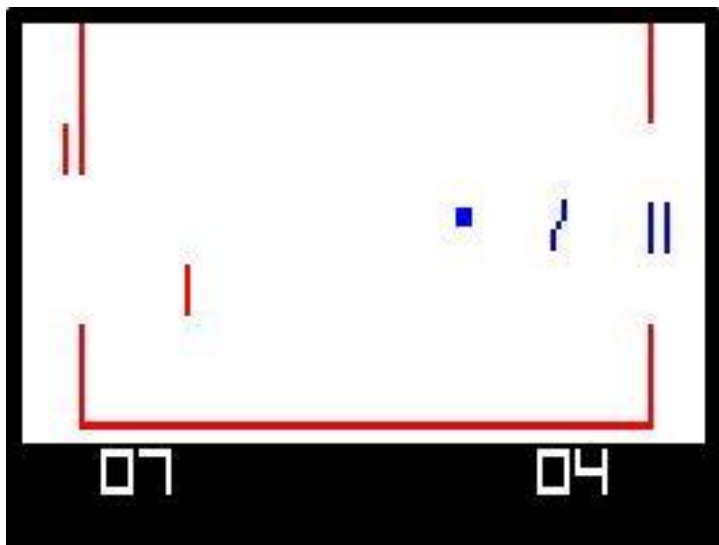
Enter the Dragon

Fairchild effectively had the market to themselves for just under a year. Videogames systems were still viewed as something which would only sell at Christmas, and it was July 1977 before Atari released their 2600 - a machine which was almost rushed to market just to compete with the Fairchild. The 2600 was several leaps above the VES, with relatively high-definition graphics, much more sophisticated audio, and, maybe most importantly, a number of games which were much more fun than the equivalents on the VES. Atari also had a much larger advertising budget.

Fairchild reacted to this new competition



by releasing several new games, and changing the name of their console to the Fairchild Channel F. After a few months, however, the Channel F was already lagging behind the 2600, and Fairchild's interest in the market was waning. In an effort to cut costs, Fairchild's engineers started to design an updated Channel F, with sounds generated through the TV, removable controllers, and plastic replacing the wood-grain effect of the original box.



The death knell for the Channel F, however, came in January 1978, as the First Videogame Crash began. The redesigned system had never been launched, but even if it had there would have been little market for it - consumers were faced with a market of Pong machines being sold off at miniscule prices, and the Channel F and 2600 were too expensive by comparison. Consumers lost interest in the market, and so did Fairchild.

Enter the Phoenix

So, one and a half years for the first ever programmable console. Well, not quite. In early 1978, the rights and designs to the Channel F were sold to

Every Game Ever!

The Fairchild was not blessed with hundreds of games - indeed, only 29 cartridges were ever released. Each had its release number printed in a large font on the front of the cartridge, with the name of the game in a less remarkable fashion.

Here, then, is a list of every game ever, along with the game ID number ...

- | | |
|-----|--|
| | Hockey/Tennis (built in) |
| #1 | Tic-Tac-Toe / Shooting Gallery / Doodle |
| #2 | Desert Fox |
| #3 | Video Blackjack |
| #4 | Spitfire |
| #5 | Space War |
| #6 | Math Quiz I |
| #7 | Math Quiz II |
| #8 | Magic Numbers |
| #9 | Drag Race |
| #10 | Maze / Cat and Mouse |
| #11 | Backgammon / Acey Ducey |
| #12 | Baseball |
| #13 | Robot War |
| #14 | Sonar Search |
| #15 | Memory Match |
| #16 | Dodge It |
| #17 | Pinball Challenge |
| #18 | Hangman |
| #19 | Checkers |
| #20 | Video Whizball * |
| #21 | Bowling |
| #22 | Slot Machine |
| #23 | Galactic Space Wars |
| #24 | Pro Football |
| #25 | Casino Poker (also known as Casino Royale) † |
| #26 | Alien Invasion † |
| | Democart |
| | Democart 2 |

* note that cart number 20 in Germany was a chess game, and Video Whizball was not released in Europe.

† the last two games were only ever released in plain white boxes, as a cost-cutting measure. Many of the Zircon games were available by mail-order only towards the end of the console's life.

The following helped me when compiling this article, so thanks go to:
Rich Gallo of RetroGames-R-Us, Rikard Ljungkvist and Russ Perry Jnr

Zircon. The new owners dusted down the plans for the redesigned console, and launched the Channel F System II in mid 1979, for \$100. A further five games were released, bringing the total in the US to 26. The system was also licensed to companies around the world, resulting in the Saba Video Play, the ITT Tele-Match Processor and the Nordmende Teleplay (a silver unit) in Germany, the Ingelen Tele-Match Processor in Austria, and the Grandstand in the UK. Luxor, a Swedish company, had already released a version of the VES, and designed two further versions of the machine, one of which never made it past the prototype stage.

The new budget price point meant that the system sold relatively well, and was manufactured until 1984, when the Second Videogame Crash saw all interest in gaming fall off.

Nowadays, the only reason to want a Channel F is for a sense of history - but for that alone, it's well worth finding one. The games are exceptionally dated, in both graphics and gameplay, but what would you expect? This is where it all started - the precursor to the Master System, the Jaguar, the Gameboy. We've come a long way.

Pioneering isn't easy

The Fairchild VES was the first programmable console. They had nobody to learn from, and as such the machine had a few odd quirks...

In the first version of the VES, the sound was from a speaker inside the machine itself, rather than through the TV.

The power switch was hidden at the back of the unit, which proved awkward to access.

The controllers had a full sphere of movement - they could be pushed forward, backwards and to the sides; they could be twisted clockwise and anti-clockwise (specifically to play Pong); they could be pushed in (as a fire button).

As with the later Pong machines, the controllers were hard-wired into the console.

The console had a smoke-grey plastic dust cover. Mmm, 70's fashion...

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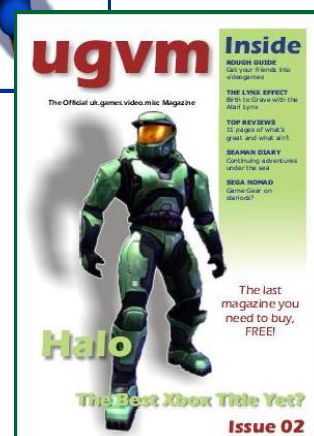
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Beyond the Balrog

Playing with parsers and talking with text... **Tim Miller** remembers the long-gone days of the text adventure.

James Sutherland's sig currently reads "You are standing at the end of a road before a small brick building." For those unfamiliar with that phrase, you can see it by going to <http://digital-eel.com/zdim/if/adv34.htm>, and starting the game. It's the first line of Adventure, the first-ever text adventure, or interactive fiction game. Over the past 25 years it's spawned an entire genre, more than one in fact, and yet nowadays you can't find a single text-adventure to buy in any shop.

Well, that's not exactly true. Of the genres that Adventure founded, several are just about still around, although they've evolved almost beyond recognition. Full Throttle, Monkey Island, the Hitchhikers' Guide to the Galaxy, Dizzy and Zork... all belong to the same family of game, though at first you wouldn't believe it. But all consist of finding objects, using them in different places, and trying to open new locations to explore.

Development of the First

Will Crowther has two technical programming achievements to his name - he wrote much of the assembly code which the Internet uses to control its routers, and he wrote much of the original Adventure. The latter was a pet project for him - in an attempt to stay in contact with his daughters after his divorce, he designed a game for them to play based on the real caves he and his former wife had explored together.

After designing the original on paper, Crowther started to program a game in FORTRAN.

"...the caving had stopped, because that had become awkward, so I decided I would fool around and write a program that was a re-creation in fantasy of my caving, and also would be a game for the kids, and perhaps some aspects of the Dungeons and Dragons that I had been playing," said Crowther in a recent interview. "My idea was that it would be a computer game that would not be intimidating to non-computer people, and that was one of the reasons why I made it so that the player directs the game with natural language input, instead of more standardized commands."

It was this use of a natural-language parser which meant that the game took off like wildfire - that, and the fact that it was distributed for free. The game was installed on computing lab machines all over the world, normally without the knowledge of the system administrators.

One such copy was found in 1976 by Don Woods. He was immediately hooked, and after a long period he decided to contact Crowther to ask permission to expand and improve the game. To do this, he sent an email to crowther@* - that is, an email to every known sitename on the Internet. Crowther responded, agreed, and the game was expanded to become the original Adventure.

Evolution Timeline

Years of text, shown in pictures...



1977 Colossal Cave Adventure



1979 Dog Star Adventure



1980 Mystery House



1981 Zork II



1982 Zork III



1983 Enchanter

1978 Adventureland



1980 Zork



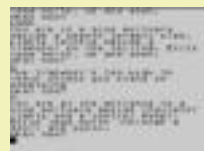
1980 The Wizard and the Princess



1982 Deadline



1983 Snowball



1983 Adventure Quest



Feature

The game was commercially released in 1981, on the Unix platform. When IBM released their PC, the game was included in the package by default.

```
Welcome to Adventure!! Would you like
instructions?
Y

Somewhere nearby is Colossal Cave, where
others have found fortunes in treasure and
gold, though it is rumored that some who
enter are never seen again. Magic is said to
work in the cave. I will be your eyes and
hands. Direct me with commands of 1 or 2
words. I should warn you that I look at only
the first five letters of each word, so
you'll have to enter "northeast" as "ne" to
distinguish it from "north". (Should you get
stuck, type "help" for some general hints.
For information on how to end your
adventure, etc., type "info".)
```

The Early Years

The success of Adventure, by now known as the Colossal Cave Adventure, inspired many to start working on their own text adventures, or "interactive fiction". A group of graduate students at MIT worked together to produce Dungeon, which was later renamed Zork when the students formed their own company, Infocom, to release the game.

"When Zork was originally written, it was not intended to be a commercial product", said Marc Blank, one of the original authors. "When Infocom was founded, in 1979, we certainly expected that the game would be popular, but I don't think we dreamed that it would have the success that it finally achieved."

Zork spawned two direct sequels and countless

spinoffs. Infocom didn't stick with just the one game series, though - during the 1980s the company produced 31 text adventures, and 4 "graphic" adventures - text adventures with illustrations for each location. They were exceptionally successful, in main due to the quality of their games. A Google search for Infocom will show just how large a following they acquired.

```
Best of House          Score: 0      Moves: 2

ZORK I: The Great Underground Empire
Copyright (c) 1981, 1982, 1983 Infocom, Inc. All rights reserved.
ZORK is a registered trademark of Infocom, Inc.
Revision 88 / Serial number 840726

Best of House
You are standing in an open field west of a white house, with a boarded front
door.
There is a small mailbox here.

>OPEN MAILBOX
Opening the small mailbox reveals a leaflet.

>READ LEAFLET
(Taken)
"HELLO TO ZORK!"

ZORK is a game of adventure, danger, and low cunning. In it you will explore
some of the most amazing territory ever seen by mortals. No computer should be
without one!"

>
```

Infocom wasn't the only company in the area. Partially in response to the success of Infocom, a group of British programmers formed Magnetic Scrolls, which concentrated on the graphical adventures that Infocom tended to avoid. The quality of Magnetic Scrolls games was generally thought to be unsurpassed; although the descriptions of locations were lacking compared to Infocom adventures, the graphical additions made up for it considerably. Another company involved in the scene was Level 9 - founded in part to release the original Adventure on British computers.

The ultimate step for text adventures came in 1986, when Incentive Software released the Graphic Adventure Creator (GAC) - an application which allowed users to easily and freely create their own



1984 King's Quest



1985 Déjà Vu



1986 Labyrinth



1987 The Guild of Thieves



1987 The Lurking Horror



1988 Corruption

1984 Hitchhiker's
Guide to the Galaxy



1985 The Pawn



1987 Maniac Mansion



1987 Leisure Suit
Larry



1988 Zak McKracken



1989 Journey



adventures. Along with PAW and Quill (two similar applications), this meant that the market was flooded with rubbish at first, but some excellent games were eventually produced, often in response to competitions run in magazines.

By this time, text adventures were quite different to role-playing games, which invariably involved stat-building and battling. Adventuring and RPGing were to take two quite different paths.

Maturing the Concept

When adventures moved onto the 16-bit computers, they evolved further. Initially the games were the same as released on the 8-bits, with better graphical locations, but that changed when Sierra released text-based games with interactive graphics, such as the King's Quest series. A further step was taken by Lucasarts with Maniac Mansion, which used an interface called SCUMM (the SScripting Utility for Maniac Mansion).



SCUMM was a breakthrough as it moved the control from the keyboard to the mouse. Instead of typing "open door", the user was required to click on the word "open" on the control panel, and then click on the door. The era of point-and-click adventures was beginning (while this had previously been used in a

game called Déjà Vu, it was then unintuitive and clumsy).

Lucasarts remained at the forefront of point-and-click adventures for years, using their SCUMM system, combined with humour. Monkey Island, Sam & Max, and Day of the Tentacle were universally praised, and sold very well. Indeed, Lucasarts had so strong a hold on the market that it wasn't until 1996, when Revolution Software released Broken Sword, that a rival adventure sold in appreciable numbers.



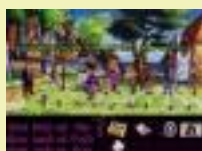
End of an Era

Which brings us to the present. Where are text-based adventures now? Well, they're not. Monkey Island 4 and Broken Sword 3 are abandoning the point-and-click interface and becoming a game where you directly control the character. This has been done before, of course - the Dizzy games had exactly the same idea.

But adventures are still around, outside the commercial games scene. GAC games are still released from time to time to be played by emulation. Many of the older text games can be played online, via Java (see <http://digital-eel.com/zdim/if/beyond.htm>). A game where you have to use your imagination is becoming a rare thing, but it'll never disappear. Go North.



1990 The Secret of Monkey Island



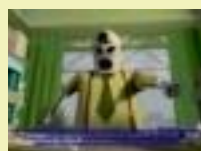
1991 Monkey Island 2: LeChuck's Revenge



1993 Myst



1996 Broken Sword



1998 Grim Fandango

2000 Escape From Monkey Island

1990 Wonderland



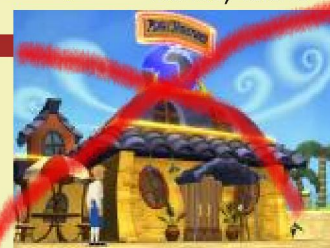
1993 Day of the Tentacle



1994 Full Throttle



1997 The Curse of Monkey Island



Facing the Dark Side

Despite the dire warnings given by the crew of `comp.sys.sinclair`, **deKay** dons the Helmet of Justice, clutches a C64 and steps boldly forward...

Just as many Xbox owners hate Gamecube owners today, and Atari ST owners hated Amiga owners in the 90s, in the 80s the Commodore 64 owners hated Sinclair Spectrum owners. And everyone hated the Amstrad CPC owners.

I am one of those Spectrum owners. And now, for the enjoyment of the readers of **ugvm**, I will be going over to The Dark Side. I will be experiencing, for the first time, the Commodore 64. Well, I say the first time. In fact, I have used one occasionally before, and in fact own one (since I collect computers and so need one to complete my collection further), but I have never played with them properly. Certainly not to the extent that I used my Spectrum.

But where to start? If I were to power up my Speccy I would know exactly which games to play. Run Baby Run, Chuckie Egg, Jet Set Willy, Head Over Heels, Castle Master, and so on. I never had any interest in the C64 because it was well known to be completely crap, for the simple reason that it was completely crap. Or so all Spectrum owners swore an oath to on the day they got their machine (May 16th 1984, in my case. From Asda, in Liverpool. For £129.99*).

I posted a message to `comp.sys.cbm`, a place where I once started the Mother Of All Flamewars by crossposting "The C64 was crap" to both there and `comp.sys.sinclair`, asking for recommendations for games. Whilst trawling Al Gore's Internet I also stumbled across 64Apocalypse, which had a list of popular and supposedly great C64 games. I then compiled a list of my own, drawing from both these sources and from my memories of great Speccy games that also had C64 versions. I armed myself with a couple of C64 emulators, and dived in.

Before I go any further, it should be noted that I am not bothered with technical aspects. I couldn't care less which machine has the faster CPU, or the higher screen resolution. I am merely comparing the two computers on the basis of which had the best games, which was the most fun to play, and whether I feel I missed out by owning a Speccy instead of a C64 when I was little. Please note also, dear reader, that it was the decision of my parents over what machine I actually got from Asda on that day. I strongly suspect that I only got the Speccy because it was cheaper. My mum is still unsure as to what a

computer actually is (and in fact, what the difference between a PC, a DVD player and the microwave control panel are), so I doubt very much that tech specs swayed her decision at all.

Firstly, I decided to have a look at some C64 versions of Speccy classics. Starting with, Manic Miner.

On first impressions, very little is different. Of course, there's no colour clash (and that's the last you'll hear me say of that, because it's a given) and the title music sounds a bit better (the C64's SID chip perhaps helping here). However, play is a bit slower than on the Spectrum, and the collision detection is terrible. In-game tunes are a tad muffled, but better sounding than the Speccy, and the sound effects are almost the same. Besides that, it's pretty much the same game.

Starting up Chuckie Egg, and oh dear. Firstly, someone has mangled the graphics so that they're twice as wide as the should be. Then there's the terrible collision detection (probably as a result of the mangled graphics). The level layouts are the same, but the classic 'routes' I always took don't work - even though they do on both the MSX and BBC versions of the game. I do admit that this isn't a big problem, but it does mean it isn't a faithful conversion. One plus over the Speccy Chuckie Egg is the addition of a choice of game speed, from 1-6. 3 is about equivalent to the Speccy version, with 6 being too fast to comprehend, and comes with a health warning. No, really.



Chuckie Egg



At this point it becomes clear that people who have never played the Speccy version of these games may find similar flaws when faced with them. A C64 owner would probably point out that Henhouse Harry (the main character in Chuckie Egg) is too thin and not detailed enough in the Spectrum game. Perhaps another tack should be chosen, as it would be too difficult to veer from my bias carrying on in this manner.

So I thought I'd try some games I either never had on the Speccy, or never came out on it. Things are a different story. The first I tried was suggested by several people - Super Pipeline 2.



Super Pipeline 2

I suspect it may have been an arcade game at some point, as I do recall playing this somewhere before (there may even be a Spectrum version, although I don't recall one and certainly didn't look). It has a nice (but nothing special) tune, and unexciting and blocky, but usable graphics. But it's pretty good. You have to run round a pipe, getting your helpers to repair holes in it made by assorted tools which roam the pipeline, and also kill you. Once enough fluid has passed round the pipe and into some cans, it's next level time. OK, so it does nothing the Speccy can't do, but it's fun. There is a slight dig at Sinclair though (and this may be why it was suggested to me in the first place, those cheeky comp.sys.cbm

bods!); once you finish the first level - a C5 drives by and your plumber bloke smashes it up.

From what I recall from some old issues of C&VG (a rival publication to the fine tome you are reading now), and some more CSC suggestions, I thought I'd have a go at the highly rated Mayhem in Monsterland. Arriving quite late in the C64's (and indeed, the 8-bit world's in general) life, it is an obvious attempt to replicate the popularity of such console platformers as Mario and Sonic. It's quite pretty, and smooth running, but nothing really all that special. I can't think of another 8-bit computer game that looks or sounds as nice, although Rolling Ronny comes close, but the spark



Mayhem in Monsterland

of fun that Mario had in spades is missing. Perhaps if I'd never played the games Mayhem aspires to be, I'd be more positive about it, but I can't be. The controls are too 'slippery', and the levels repetitive. A shame, since I was perversely hoping to be converted to the C64 on the basis of this one game.

By now, I could see that the C64 had it's own fair share of great games, and crap games - just like most other platforms since the dawn of time. I was about to find,



however, one huge factor the Commodore machine has over the Spectrum. It has Maniac Mansion - one of my favourite Amiga (and NES) games.

Lucasfilm and Sierra were giants of the whole graphical adventure genre. See Tim's article on text adventures this issue for more proof of this. One of the greatest games of this type was Maniac Mansion. Created by Lucasfilm, it involves you and some chums (whom you get to choose at the beginning of the game, and the ones you select actually affect the way you must complete it) trying to



Maniac Mansion

rescue your girlfriend from the scary inhabitants, which include some aliens, of a creepy old house. It's full of humour, some great set pieces, wicked puzzles and genuine replay value with multiple endings. And it never came out on the Speccy.

Looking down a list of top C64 games, I spied a few other similar games - including another of my

Maniac Mansion

Amiga favourites, Zak McKracken and the Alien Mindbenders. NOW I wish I'd had a C64!

Another genre of games I liked 'back in the day' are those 3D arcade adventures using the Freespace game engine developed by Incentive Software. Games such as Dark Side, Driller, Total Eclipse, and best of all - Castle Master. They were astonishing feats of programming - especially the 8-bit versions. I took a look at these on the C64 and was aghast. They look awful. Blocky, jagged lines, juddery movement, and such a low frame rate you wonder if there are monkeys in the machine drawing each individual screen update. The Speccy versions may have been monochrome, but at

least they had a decent turn of speed.

I wondered if perhaps the C64 just wasn't all that quick at the mathematical jiggery-pokery needed for these number-crunching intensive games. Maybe it was just the Freescape engine that performed badly on the Commodore. To verify this, I tried Elite and Mercenary. Although both good, they suffered similar problems. The screen resolution seems significantly lower than that of the Spectrum, and the C64 versions of these games ran obviously slower and jerkier than the Spectrum offerings. At least they're there though.

While working my way through several more games, I noticed another type of game the C64 seems to excel at - side scrolling shoot-em-ups. R-Type especially caught my eye. Although I've never really been into scrolly shooters (except the rubbished-by-most and almost universally ignored Dominator on the Spectrum), R-Type seemed to run so much more smoothly on the C64 than on the Spectrum. Part of this I'm sure is down to the (yes, I said I wasn't going to mention it again) colour clash the Speccy is so often dogged by.

Other both-format shoot-em-ups are similarly affected and are



therefore generally better on the Commodore.

I have noticed a general trend with many Commodore games and their likeliness to be better than Spectrum versions. It would seem that if the game is a conversion of an Amiga game, it is usually better (overall) on the C64 than on the Speccy. This can be backed up with games such as *Turrican II* - although still a good game on the Sinclair machine, it doesn't even come close to the C64 version. It doesn't really even look or play like it's the same game.

Turrican II



The C64 was also more likely to actually receive a port of an Amiga or ST game, probably due to the larger world-wide userbase of the computer (although the difference in sales of the C64 and Speccy were much smaller in the UK).

It would also appear, that as both 8-bit machines neared the end of their commercial lives, that the Commodore had the lion's share of the good games, whereas the Speccy was mostly forgotten and release schedules consisted more and more of rubbish, re-releases and educational software (such as *Fun School*). The C64 continued to have worthwhile new software until much closer to the end.

Same Name, Different Game

As much as programmers tried, often one 8-bit version of a game paled in comparison to another. Sometimes, the game wasn't even similar...

Batty

The C64 version of this Breakout clone has prettier graphics than the Spectrum copy, but the ball physics are out and the bat control is jerky, ruining gameplay.



Great Giana Sisters

A reasonable clone of Mario on the C64, but is better than the Speccy version simply because it actually got released. Nintendo got it banned before the Spectrum tapes ever made it out the door.



Chase HQ

On the C64 it's just plain awful, and was suggested to me as crap by almost everyone! On the Spectrum, it's outstanding.

Uridium

On the C64 it's fast, slick and great fun. On the Spectrum, it's dull, juddery and plain.



Impossible Mission

A fun arcade-adventure platformer on both systems, with just one real C64 improvement - it doesn't have the Spectrum version's bug that made it *literally* an Impossible Mission!

Action Biker

The old KP Skips front-man Clumsy Colin had his own game, but whereas the Speccy version had you driving round a viewed-from-above town collecting things for your bike, the C64 version was more of an isometric obstacle course. Both games were, however, complete rubbish.

After all this testing, and more importantly, playing, I must inform you that I have not been converted. I am glad that I had a Spectrum, and I enjoyed the games I played on it. I can, however, say that had my parents brought home a Commodore 64 for me that day, I'm sure that I'd have been equally pleased, and enjoyed the games I'd have had for that machine. Both machines had flaws, both seem better equipped to cope with different games (the C64 doesn't do 3D as well, the Spectrum lacks

point-and-click adventures). Most importantly, they both have hundreds of games that make either computer a worthwhile purchase.

I'll always be a Spectrum fan. But now, perhaps, I have a bit more respect for the old nemesis. For now though, back to Maniac Mansion...

(Of course, the CPC was better than either of them. **Dep. Ed.**)



Power Drive

deKay slips on his golfing gloves and tees off. Let's not tell him it's a rally driving game, eh readers?

On the NeoGeo, there's this great rally driving game called Neo DriftOut. There's another one called Thrash Rally. Power Drive is obviously trying to be either of these games, but sadly, it isn't.

Now, you wouldn't expect the SNES to compete with the NeoGeo graphically or sonically (although the SNES versions of NeoGeo games like Samurai Shodown manage to be quite close), but since these NeoGeo games are not exactly pushing the hardware, you'd expect a reasonable interpretation of at least the gameplay.

You start by choosing a car to drive, which can be either a Mini Cooper or a Fiat Kumquat (or whatever it is). It doesn't seem to make a great deal of difference to the game though, except one is cheaper so you have a bit more cash to spend on repairing it later. And off you go to race. The track scrolls around and your view is kind of 'above and from the side', the same as the NeoGeo titles. Big arrows appear to tell you where the corners and jumps and things are, and a few powerups litter the course.

The first few qualifiers and races are fairly easy to complete in the required time, but actually staying on the road is another matter. You slide all over the place, even when travelling in a straight line. This may be "realistic", but it does mean that you spend far too much time scraping your car along the barriers, grass, trees, sandbanks and other roadside obstacles. The powerups include a nitro (to speed

you into walls faster), money (although in all-too-meagre sums) and time (which stops the clock for a few seconds). So, realistic on one hand, and not the other.

It's the scraping and crashing of your car which causes the real problems to the premise of the game. After a race, you spend your tiny winnings on repairing your car. Sadly, it usually costs more to repair fully than what you've earned - even if you've picked up all the money powerups. You then have to take part in the next race (which costs money too) with a damaged car. Having a broken car, unsurprisingly, affects how it drives. This means even MORE smashing into things as your steering goes out the window, and the race becomes harder to complete as your car slows down due to engine damage. The result? Unless you're very skilful at avoiding everything, you eventually have a car too knackered to successfully complete a race, earning you no money, meaning you can't afford the repair costs. It's a quick downward spiral into GameOver.

With perseverance, you'll become better at the game and manage to get further into it. You can buy better cars (which go slightly faster but appear to take more damage more easily, and cost more to repair), and the level styles change depending on the location. You therefore get the usual foresty levels and desert levels. Occasionally, the game throws in a night stage. Your headlights are next to useless here, as they only light up a tiny amount of track about an inch



in front of your car, and if they're damaged they flicker like strobes. They're pointless anyway as you can see the track without any problems even when they're broken.

There is a multi-player mode, but it's a missed opportunity since it's take-turns only. It may have been a saving grace for Power Drive if it were to have had a split-screen mode. I suppose it would slow the game down, but then, it's a heck of a lot slower than other games of its type anyway.

In terms of graphics, you've seen much better on the SNES. They're dull, a bit grainy and the animation on the car is horrendous. OK, cars don't do a lot, but when you're driving along the programmers saw fit to make the car "vibrate". And it looks stupid. When you turn, there are not enough frames of turning animation to make it smooth either. The presentation of menu and intro screens could have



been much better, with an awful, blocky Mode 7 world map, and some digitised rally cars "in action". These rally cars all appear to be Ford Cortinas and Ye Olde Escorts and not actually the cars in the game itself.

The sound isn't much of an improvement either, with one grating engine drone and twangy out of tune in-game music. Later levels feature different music, which is less twangy but just as irritating.

Another niggle is the way you navigate through cut screens, selection screens and options. Sometimes you use the B button to progress, other times it's the Start button. Or the Select button. Why couldn't they have been consistent at least?

If you're looking for a fun driving game, try Rock 'n' Roll Racing. Or Super Skidmarks. Don't even go near this pile of rubbish.

1/5

Megadrive

Review

Super Hang On

Jambo81 goes Full Throttle with his Megadrive.

First of all, unlike other reviews, this one isn't tainted by nostalgia. I'd never really played Hang On before (Super or otherwise), and I don't know much about its history. Therefore, I can say this: it might have been really good at one point, but now it's pretty crap. Road Rash II (another game from the same era) smashes its face in with a chain.

It's just plain boring compared to the Road Rash series. It's slower, much harder to control, and has



none of the fun parts like violence, weapons and crazy falling off stunts. It also has horrible periods of grinding slow-down, at least on

the Megagames version, which turns it into a slower game punctuated by bursts of occasional speed.

Purists with lovely memories of Super Hang On will probably object to this review, but as an objective opinion, I have to say it's been superseded by games like the Road Rash series in the fun stakes, and by games like Excitebike 64 in the general motorbiking stakes. Sorry.

2/5



Renegade

John Abbott gets violent. Is he a rebel without a cause?

The subway train doors open and you walk onto the dark and grimy station platform. You find yourself surrounded by thugs and punks, some carry metal pipes. Two of them walk towards you...

So begins the first level of Renegade by Imagine Software. This is what is considered to be a classic beat-em-up for the Spectrum home computer (C64 and Amstrad CPC versions were also available). The game itself is a conversion of a Taito arcade game. The concept is simple, knock down an entire street gang, and then take on their boss.

You only have a few basic moves, this isn't Street Fighter 2. You can punch, flying kick or kick behind you. If you punched someone enough they would keel over allowing you to knee them in the groin.



The second level is on a pier and starts with a motorcycle gang trying to run you down. Only a precisely timed flying kick can knock them down. The following level you're attacked by hookers with whips before you had to take out their pimp. Finally, you take on the boss of bosses, but he's armed with a pistol - one shot and you go down and stay down.

The enemies always attack you two at a time, so it isn't always plain sailing. You can however use the playing area to your advantage. For example, walk to the edge of the playing area and then you can only be attacked from one side! The real challenge comes from working out how to dodge the boss' special attack and how to defeat him. Just to make it more of a challenge, the boss always joins the fray just when his gang are down to the last two.



All this violence is crammed into the tiny 48k of Spectrum memory. However, those with 128k machines are in for a treat. Extra moves are available, as well as enhanced music tracks and an extra level of violent action. Instead of just kneeling them in the groin, you can also throw your enemies over your shoulder. Or, if a thug is knocked down, you can crouch down and punch them in the face until they pass out! Unfortunately these extra moves make the game easier to complete. And they complain games are too violent today.

4/5

ugvm

Silver Award

The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy

Who'd have thought it - an electronic book. **Tim Miller** ponders this on his Pocket PC.

I think it's probably fair to write this review in two parts. If you are someone who's heard the radio show, or read the books, on which this game is based (you'd know if you have - they've got the same name), read the first part. Otherwise read the second part. Both sets of people can read the third part. Off you go...

PART ONE

What we have here is one of the finest adaptations of a radio show to the computer screen - that's not saying much, but it would still apply if every other game were an adaptation of the Archers or Late Night Love. You know the story, which comes as a great advantage when playing the game, since it's rather difficult to figure out what to do in the limited time available to you. For example, after about 8 moves your house is demolished, and if you haven't done the six things needed by this point, your game is over. It takes a lot of perseverance, even when you do know the eventual goal.

```

Front of House                               Score: 10/12
You make your way down to the front porch.

Front Porch
This is the enclosed front porch of your home. Your front garden lies to the
south, and you can re-enter your home to the north.
On the doormat is a pile of junk mail.

>get mail
You gather up the pile of mail.

>s
Front of House
You can enter your home to the north. A path leads around it to the northeast
and northwest, and a country lane is visible to the south. All that lies
between your home and the huge yellow bulldozer bearing down on it is a few
yards of mud.

Mr. Prosser, from the local council, is standing on the other side of the
bulldozer. He seems to be wearing a digital watch. He looks startled to see
you emerge, and yells at you to get out of the way.
The bulldozer rumbles slowly toward your home.

>sit down and have a nice cup of tea and a custard cream

```

The humour of the radio show is captured perfectly, however. All the characters appear, from Ford to the Babel fish, and there is a certain (limited) amount of interaction with them available. The parser is a comprehensive one, which makes doing what you want to do relatively easy, although some commands take an odd grammatical structure (for example, "say Ford, why do you have a towel?").

While it's a difficult game, you'll progress further each time you play, and the fact that it's based on

```

Bedroom                                       Score: 0/1
THE HITCHHIKER'S GUIDE TO THE GALAXY
Infocom interactive fiction - a science fiction story
Copyright (c) 1984 by Infocom, Inc. All rights reserved.
Release 58 / Serial number 851002

You wake up. The room is spinning very gently round your head. Or at least it
would be if you could see it which you can't.

It is pitch black.

>turn on light
Good start to the day. Pity it's going to be the worst one of your life. The
light is now on.

Bedroom, in the bed
The bedroom is a mess.
It is a small bedroom with a faded carpet and old wallpaper. There is a
washbasin, a chair with a tatty dressing gown slung over it, and a window with
the curtains drawn. Near the exit leading south is a phone.
There is a flathead screwdriver here. (outside the bed)
There is a toothbrush here. (outside the bed)

>

```

something you know only increases the desire to see the end. It'll last you a long time, and will provide a good deal of enjoyment.

PART TWO

Picture the scene - you eagerly rip the box of your new game open, you put it in the computer and load it up, you start the game, and after eight inputs you're dead. You restart the game, find one command that works, but after eight inputs you're still dead. You restart. Same as last time. Rinse, lather, repeat.

For someone who doesn't know the story of the Hitchhikers' Guide, this is a very frustrating game. There's little indication of what your next goal is, and there's often a time limit (based on the number of turns) which makes you die often. While you will make progress, it'll be very slow, and there's no final goal specified at the start for you to aim for at.

That said, the interface is quite user-friendly, with a parser that recognises most attempts to tell it what to do. When you die, it's obvious why you did, and you'll restart just a little bit wiser. But you'll need a lot of patience to get to the end.

PART THREE

To sum up, then - it's technically proficient, but it's hard and will last you ages. The fact that the game is written by Douglas Adams himself certainly adds to the experience, and makes it essential for any fan of his. Whether you have the patience to get even onto the Vogon spaceship will depend on whether you like doing the same thing over and over again.

3/5



Yoshi's Island

Yoshi's Island didn't have the easiest task in the world, it came out in 1995 and followed the revolutionary graphics of Donkey Kong Country as well as following in the footsteps of the excellent Super Mario World. Many people were surprised that rather than attempt to better the graphics of DKC or even SMW it sidestepped them both and went for very stylistic child-like storybook drawings. One could almost compare it to the new GC Zelda game in terms of complete style change.

Yoshi's Island tells the tale of two babies, Mario & Luigi, and how they first met the Yoshies. To briefly

recap the story: a stork is carrying two twins when Kamek, the evil magikooa (who made an appearance in Super Mario World) crashes into the stork and swipes one of the babies. The remaining baby, together with a map the stork was carrying, falls onto an island, more specifically the home of the Yoshies. The Yoshies resolve to take Mario to the destination on the map while Kamek sends his goons to track down the second baby. From such a "cutesy childish" story and given the graphical style you could easily be mistaken for thinking this was a kid's game: a walkover to be completed in a few hours. You'd be wrong. Despite not covering the size and scope of Super Mario World and the fact that it's a fairly straightforward platformer, Yoshi's Island is a worthy challenge indeed that will last you a long while.

The premise is simple: As Yoshi you must carry baby Mario on your back through the levels, avoiding Kamek's troops. Yoshi has the ability to suck enemies up and turn them into eggs which he can then throw at objects and enemies. Seems like fairly standard platforming stuff. The main twist is that Yoshi himself is pretty much invulnerable (I say pretty



deKay offers his views...

Yoshi's Island is pure Nintendo magic. I don't think there has been a better 2D platformer since - even the vomit-inducingly cute Yoshi's Story on the N64 pales next to this. Everything about it is so right, the 'hand-drawn' look of the graphics, the difficulty curve, the sound effects, music and everything. There has been so much attention to detail that you can see why there was a huge gap between this game and Super Mario World.

Ok, so Nintendo have created canyon sized holes in the Mario timeline (Mario and Luigi are now twins, and not from Brooklyn, and met Yoshi before Super Mario World, etc.) but that matters not. The gameplay more than fills them in, and there is a great deal of replay value, what with trying to get 100% on every level, and then the secret levels.

Every level oozes quality and originality - the latter a rare event in platform games especially. One part of the game that stands out here are the levels with floating balls of fluff. Should Yoshi touch or eat one, and the screen starts waving like you're on some kind of bad acid trip! The in-game tunes will have you humming, and the sound effects are spot on. There is nothing about this game not to like.

Don't let the cute graphics and sound put you off though. This is not a little kid's game, as later levels will really test you. The difficulty curve throughout the game is pitched just right too, with early levels showing you the basics, and later ones both challenging and puzzling (as the game throws in a few problem-solving elements too).

Plainly put, you have to own this game. If not, then you have no right to call yourself a gamer.



much as he can still fall off ledges and the like), every time you get hit by an enemy baby Mario will fall off your back and float skywards in a bubble, crying as he floats off. You have just ten seconds to retrieve him before the sinister Kamek takes him away and you lose a life, however you can increase this time limit by collecting tiny stars obtainable from various sources throughout the level. There's also the addition of 20 red coins to be collected on each level. The more stars and coins you collect the higher your score for the level which might lead to something special later on.



As well as the above egg chucking ability Yoshi also has the unique skill, upon finding a suitable block, to change into a helicopter, train or car with extendable legs for a limited amount of time. While this is only a temporary diversion from the main gameplay it's certainly a good change of pace as you race to use your abilities to the fullest before they expire.

Yoshi's Island boasts six worlds each with eight levels as well as secret levels on each. Each world has two boss encounters, one midway boss and one traditional end of level boss. Each boss starts off as something small and innocent but is transformed by the evil Kamek into a giant evil monster. How to defeat these varies from encounter to encounter but usually involves taking advantage of a well-labelled weak spot. The bosses are rather impressive given the limits of the format and each have novel ways of being offed.



Yoshi's true strengths lie in its simultaneous simplicity and complexity. If you want to race through the levels you're more than welcome to but it's the challenges of collecting that draw you back to visit past levels at which point you discover the hidden areas the game has to offer. Compared to later 3D platformers such as Donkey Kong 64, having to collect things isn't a chore, it's a delight.



Yoshi's Island has aged well. It's considered by many to even better Super Mario World despite not being as vast and is easily one of the top five SNES games ever. The graphics still look fresh today which is mainly due to the unique look only really seen in the N64's Yoshi's Story since and the gameplay itself has that timeless quality associated with most Mario games.

I only discovered the game a few years ago when I purchased a second hand SNES and managed to obtain it from eBay. For a long time this was the only way (short of emulating) to play it. However Nintendo has since re-released it as Super Mario Advance 3 on the Game Boy Advance meaning you can sample this perfect slice of platform gaming for your GBA now. I recommend you do so.

5/5
ugvm
Gold Award

Who is Yoshi?

Why, he's everyone's favourite cuddly green dinosaur, that's who he is!

First appearing in the Super NES smash hit (and one of the best games of all time) "Super Mario World", Yoshi was ridden by Mario and ate stuff. Almost everything, in fact. He could eat Koopa shells and spit them out, snack on fruit and effectively give Mario an extra 'hit'. This meant that should a bad guy hit you, Mario would fall off Yoshi rather than die.

Although most of the time he was found to be green, other coloured Yoshies appeared on the secret Star Road levels of the game. They had extra abilities over other Yoshies, such as the ability to shoot fireballs from any kind of shell that was eaten, and being able to fly.

He appeared again soon after in the fantastic "Mario Kart", also on the SNES. After a few more obscure games for Nintendo systems, such as "Yoshi's Safari" (a Super Scope shooting game) and "Yoshi's Cookie" (a puzzle game) he finally made a proper return to the SNES with this game - "Yoshi's Island".

Although named "Super Mario World 2", Yoshi's Island is actually a prequel to all of the other Mario games.

Following a short cameo appearance in "Mario 64", Yoshi later had his very own game, completely Mario-less, with the super cute "Yoshi's Story" on the N64. It was short, and easy, and almost sickeningly sweet, but was fun to play and was a brave attempt by Nintendo to release a new 2D (although it looks almost 3D) platformer in a world where 3D was now ruler.

Since then, he's been a feature in all kinds of games, such as the "Game and Watch Gallery" titles on the Gameboy, to "Super Smash Brothers" and "Mario Party". His most recent appearance is, however, in the simply amazing Gamecube title "Super Mario Sunshine" (see **ugvm01**) where once again he's saddled up to take Mario on his travels. For some reason though, water now kills him. How odd.



Carrier Command

Andrew Layden gets promoted to be put in charge of the plastic shopping bags at his local supermarket.



If you think real-time strategy means a scrolling map populated by hundreds of little men, then think again. This is merely the generic blueprint for lazy RTS developers. Carrier Command does indeed have the usual RTS traits of destroying the enemy base, gathering resources and controlling units. However, it also features a slightly more interesting approach to the action.

The game is set in an archipelago of 64 islands. The player controls one carrier, while the computer controls the other. The objective is simply to destroy the other's carrier or base island, however achieving this aim can be difficult without gaining superiority over the supply routes first. Selecting an "Action" game gives you an already established supply route covering half of the archipelago and places you right at the front of the action. The "Strategy" game lets you build your own supply route from scratch.

Each player's supply route consists of Resource, Factory and Defence islands. The player travels from island to island in the carrier. Once at an island, the carrier can release a Walrus amphibious unit to land on the island and convert the island to the necessary type. The carrier is also equipped with Manta aircraft which can be used to defend the carrier or attack enemy islands. Inflatable drones and a laser turret form additional defences.

The game is viewed by means of a 3D window, surrounded by various control icons. The rendering of the 3D display is by means of undetailed filled polygons, but is fast and depicts a convincing environment. The icons

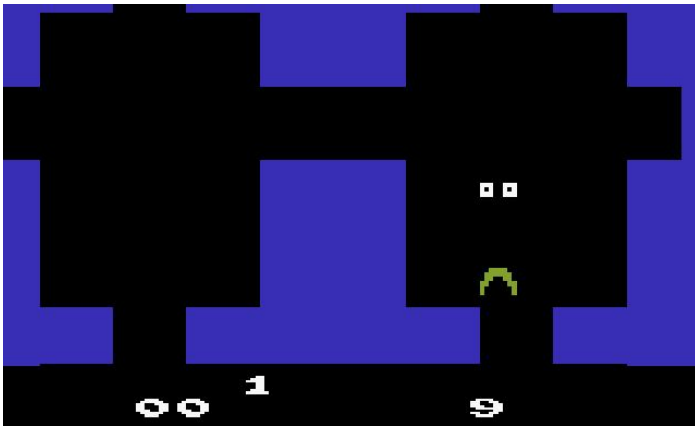
are well designed and their meaning is clear. Sound is functional, but not all that impressive - it mainly consists of simple laser blasts, engine hums and explosions.

The gameplay is where the game really excels. It's a near perfect fusion of good strategy (via the supply route creation) with decent action (direct control of the carrier, Walrus and Manta). Controls are very well handled, as the game can be played entirely via the mouse. All three vehicle types are easy to control and also feature built in autopilots to assist if you want to have more than one vehicle active at any one time.

One slight problem with the game is that it is literally real-time strategy. The player has to actually sit through each journey the carrier makes in real time! This time can be spent repairing vehicles and planning supply transfers, but is often an opportunity to go and make a cup of tea...

In short, this is an impressive and innovative strategy game which could only really be improved by the addition of a two player head-to-head mode.





Woooooooooooooooooooo! **Tim Miller** takes the sheet off his head and stops pretending to be a ghost.

Resident Evil? Silent Hill? Pah. For sheer unmitigated terror, Atari strikes gold with a tale of collecting treasure from a haunted mansion. There are no zombies, no mutated dogs, and no creeping mist. But the game excels in possibly the most haunting effect of them all - darkness.

Pass the first level of difficulty, and you're thrown into the dark. You have to explore 24 rooms of the mansion with just a match to light your way, and this has a limited range in itself. It's also the only

Haunted House

way to find the three pieces of urn (the object of the game) - items don't show up otherwise.

Easy enough, but there are ghosts and other creatures running around hoping to harm you. If an enemy enters the room, your match gets blown out, and you'll have to evade them. Luckily, you can pick up a sceptre which makes them harmless - but since you can only carry one thing at a time, you'll have to leave this behind when you find the pieces of urn.

There are nine game variations, ranging from the simple to the impossible. You'll want to complete it over and over again, even if it means you can't sleep at night.

Woooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooo!

4/5

ugvm
Silver Award



3D Monster Maze

Russell Marks stupidly tangles with a T. Rex.

There are some games that, in retrospect, almost seem to define the hardware which ran them. It sounds a bit pompous, but think about it - Sonic on the Megadrive. Tetris on the Gameboy. Elite on the BBC. And of course, 3D Monster Maze on the ZX81.

It's the simplest of games, though. Just a flat maze (and a crude 3D view of it), with a single enemy to avoid, and a single treasure to find. You couldn't make it much simpler and still have any game there at all.

Then there's the implementation, which is patchy, even for an '81. It can lose keypresses at the most



awkward of moments - and the maze could have been calculated far more quickly if it hadn't been done in Basic.

There's little doubt that the presentation was what made the game so popular. From the

opening "ANYONE THERE?", through the scrolling introduction and the silly 'mists of time' excuse as it constructs the maze in the displayless FAST mode, to the running commentary ("FOOTSTEPS APPROACHING") and animation as the T. Rex considers his culinary options for the day, it all serves to spice up what is ultimately a pretty simplistic game.

So, a defining moment for the ZX81... but no classic.

3/5



Ghostbusters

Who you gonna call? Not **Jim Taylor** 'cos he's scared of ghosts the big idiot.

Ghostbusters was one of the first breed of movie tie-ins (read: cash-ins) in the early age of gaming, before the rubbishing of the genre by licence-meisters Ocean. Released in 1984 by Activision (who are one of the few developers a) going today and b) still using the same name) it tried to attempt something different from most of the games out there. Perhaps the most advanced aspect of the game was the small bit of sampled speech of the opening titles and repeated ad nauseam as you play the game.

The main premise of Ghostbusters is fairly true to the film in that you have to catch ghosts and eventually stop the Stay-Puft Marshmallow man and Zuul.

You begin by choosing your car, and stocking it with all the equipment you need to aid in your travels. Once finished you're out on the streets, driving round the blocks of New York. Sadly at the start there's quite a bit of driving round aimlessly until finally a building starts to flash indicating the presence of a space invaders refugee. You then have to drive to the

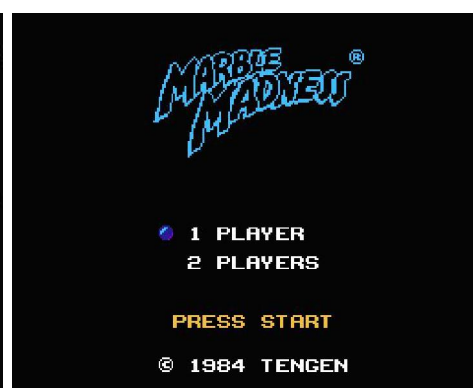
building, lay the trap and then deal with the all-important positioning of your two stick-men. I was sadly unable to discern which one was Venkman. Once both are in position you need to activate the proton packs and try and trap the ghost. Not as easy as it sounds due to the erratic movements patterns of the ghost. If you trap him you get paid and can head off to the next building, if you fail either your packs run out or the ghosts slimes you (accompanied by a horribly fuzzy "He slimed me!" sample). Sadly the main bulk of the game consists of this and it becomes rather dull after the fifth or sixth time.

Things change slightly when too many ghosts converge forming a Stay-Puft marshmallow man who will happily destroy a block for which the city charges the Ghostbusters and instantly wrecking your bank account. Luckily you can deal with him with some "bait". Quite what is in this bait that would stop a 100 foot marshmallow man isn't explained. Nonetheless it does its job and disaster is averted.

After some time and much more ghost capturing and marshmallow-man attacks the Keymaster and Gatekeeper will converge at the centre of the map. Once this has occurred you are then able to move on to the next stage. Unfortunately this is just as frustrating to deal with and I confess that I've never made it past this point.

Ghostbusters had good potential and it does have some unique ideas, sadly there's just too much repetition for it to be any sort of lasting fun.





Marble Madness

Lost marbles? Going mad? That'll be deKay then...

It is hard to define what kind of game Marble Madness is. It's not really a puzzle game, and not really a platformer. It plays like a cross between computerised Screwball Scramble and a steady hand tester. Of course, it's also similar to Super Monkey Ball, or Spindizzy, but then what type of game are these either?

The aim is to guide your marble from the start of the isometric level to the finish. In your way are holes, gaps, acid splodges, moving platforms, vacuum cleaners and evil marbles. Nothing is ever quite so straight-forward, is it? Weave your way around the 'track', dodging anything which moves and trying not to fall off. Green tube things attempt to eat your marble, and the evil black marbles try to bump you off (literally). Some shortcuts and alternative routes are available, which are trickier to navigate, but get it right and you can shave a few seconds off your time.

Oh yes, the time. You start the game with 60 seconds, and each level you are given extra seconds as a bonus. Once you run out of seconds, it's Game Over. You don't have lives as such, but dying does cost you time whilst your ball is recreated and replaced on the course. That is why these shortcuts can play an important part of completing the game - the rewards for a fast level time are high, but you're more likely to screw up and waste precious seconds

by taking the more difficult route.

Each of the 6 or so levels are pretty varied, with different types of obstacles to overcome or avoid. On one level you are warned that "everything you know is wrong", and have to travel up the level rather than down. However, you have to use the turbo button to charge *down* hills, and some parts of the level are drawn in a very Escherist manner, with holes that turn to nothing, and walls that seem to exist in too many dimensions!

The game also features a two-player simultaneous mode. Whenever a player leaves the other player behind, the straggler is warped forwards but loses time. You can knock your opponent off the track if you like too. Nice as the addition of the two-player mode is, you can't really play co-operatively (as you get in each other's way), and you can't really play versus (as you run out of time), so it is a bit pointless.

Comparing this NES version to the original coin-op, you can see that graphically it is almost identical. It manages not to have that often-annoying Vertical-Scrolly-NES-game flicker that many other titles suffer from, and apart from the colour scheme on a few levels compares well to the arcade. Sound-wise, the tunes are there, but not quite the same standard. Several sound effects are missing, but then there are

very few in the game anyway, so you're unlikely to notice. The big difference to the coin-op is speed. The NES version is quite a lot slower, but this isn't a big problem unless you are used to the arcade version's speed. It certainly isn't too slow to make it unplayable.



Marble Madness falls down in two main areas, and both are because it isn't the arcade version. To start with, the arcade cabinet had a trackball. This allowed much finer control of your marble, and made it much easier to power up hills or stop dead than with the pad. Further to this, the NES D-pad is not designed for diagonal movement. It isn't too easy to press down-left or down-right, and when you'll spend most of your time going in one of these directions you'll see that it's a problem. There is a choice of a 45-degree setting for the pad too, where up becomes up-right, and down becomes down-left, but it is still awkward - especially with an original Nintendo pad.

The second problem is longevity. There are only 6 or so levels, each taking less than a minute to complete. You'll see level 5 on your second go if you're any good, and although the last level is bloody tough (it throws everything at you), you'll have seen the whole game in a few hours.

Sadly, Marble Madness is a classic case of great in the arcade, not suitable for home. It simply doesn't work well as a console game (and the other home versions mostly bear this scar too).

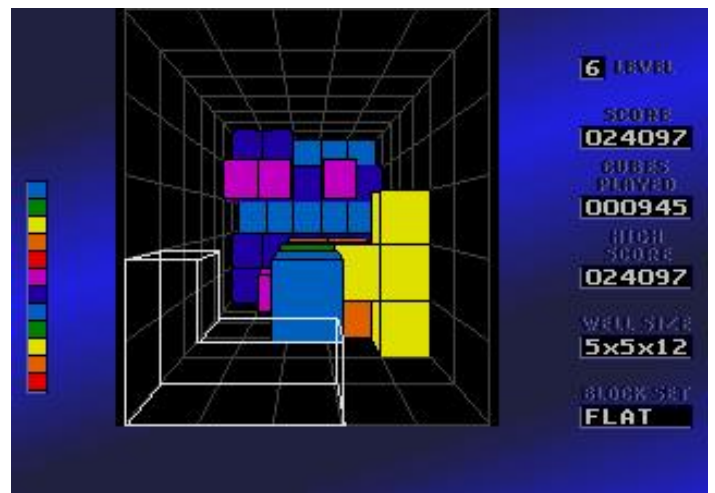
If you're looking for a game of this kind, you'd be better off with either of the two other games mentioned at the start of this review.

Blockout

Tim Miller fits a pint into a quart pot.

Tetris is the ultimate puzzler. Anyone can pick it up, it's simple, addictive, and generally excellent. Companies have tried again and again to find a similar winning formula. Blockout is one of those attempts.

Blockout is the closest we've ever had to Tetris in 3D. You view a well from above, and 3D shapes appear in front of you and start to fall away. You have to rotate these (in all three axes) to get them to fit on the floor, and make a complete plane which will then disappear. It really is Tetris in 3D.



Initially the blocks are simple - they are effectively 2D, and you can easily work out what's going on. Once you introduce the proper 3D blocks, though, it becomes a lot harder.

It's hard to see what's going on at the bottom of the screen, it's hard to see what the block you're controlling actually looks like... and (this is the killer) it's hard to actually control the block. Each of the MD's buttons controls a different rotational axis, but there's no real rhyme or reason as to which does which. In the end, it turns into a button-mash to get the block how you want it, and you lose.

It's technically impressive, if a little sluggish, but fatally flawed.



Lotus Esprit Turbo Challenge

Gremlin takes **Chris Harris** out for a merry jaunt around the countryside. Rather quickly.

It's 1990, Outrun is the king, its reign of glory seems almost undefeatable. Then all of a sudden a company named after the midnight feasting of a cuddly creature from China Town combine their skills with a those of a small car maker from a quaint English county famous for its tractors and we are presented with a challenger to the crown. Lotus Esprit Turbo Challenge is born. Star of the game is the Lotus Esprit sports car, at the time one of England's top offerings to the world of 'cars that make you dribble'.

Load the game and you get a short intro that looks like it should be on Top Gear, a nice bit of animation showing the Lotus badge and a hedgehog eye view of the meaty front end of the car as the headlights pop up, follow this with a bunch of stat screens and technical sketches of the car all accompanied by a fairly beaty bit of music and your appetite is suitably wet.

Unlike Outrun which is an A - B rally style race stage, Lotus is lap based racing which allows the element of re-fuelling to be added, which adds a degree of tactics to the tyre screeching action. The overall aim is to win each Championship so it's not necessary to win every single race which is just as well as the 14 computer opponents move from left to right over the track not aiming to block you - they're not that clever - but they do always seem to be on the bit of road you want. Unfortunately the opponent cars are all the same, a white version of your car but this is easily forgiven as

the variety of styles would surely have to mean a sacrifice of some of the speed of the game. After the start/finish line of every track there are well signposted 'lay-by' style pits which you can pull into when your car is running on fumes and the view switches to the pit crew while you tank up. This feature adds a degree of suspense as you watch the fuel trickle into your car praying that the opposition aren't whistling past shunting you down the scoresheet.

Easy mode consists of 7 races, the first supposedly being the Lotus test track at Hethel near Norwich which is a nice way to start, there's enough racing out there based on American highways and imaginary European mountain roads. The idea of whacking round the English countryside holds a certain appeal to British gamers I'm sure. As you move on to Medium and Expert modes, the amount of races increases to 10 and 15 respectively so there's a lot of racing to keep you going here. Also the number of laps increase so from 4/5 lap races on easy, by the time you're racing like a pro you've got 6 and 7 lap marathons to get through, and this is where the refuelling comes in.

Screen layout is much like Outrun except that instead of having the full screen for one player, it is always split screen and if you are in one player mode the bottom half shows a nice pit crew scene with a couple of mechanics tinkering with what you presume is the

player 2 car. The top left corner of the screen displays a red thermometer type gauge which fills up as you pelt round the laps, but you'll be too busy avoiding the oil slicks and battling the pack of white cars to worry about this!



Graphics are very pretty, the usual chase view enhanced by working brake lights and glimpses of the side of your car as you steer on full lock. There's gradient shading on the sky which is different colours on different circuits so in China it looks like you are racing at dusk while Sweden has the clear blue sky of midsummer. There's a nice variety of trackside detail, trees bushes and various road signs all of which play a part in the game as they will bounce you about and slow you down if you don't know how to brake for the sharper corners. Sound effects are very good, the whine of the engine as you shove it past the red line, and the screech of tyres as you corner on the limit and slide through the oil slicks are superb. If you've got it linked up to some good speakers you will also notice the drone of the other cars as you pass them or, God forbid, they pass you!

Although it's lap based you get white lines on the road to give the impression of speed and this is where the game excels. In previous offerings when supposedly doing 140mph you get the old problem of the



animation going the wrong way so the road appears to be going forwards faster than you are. Not so in Lotus. The lines flash past in a blur of speed and the trackside details whip up from the horizon so it really looks like you've got the hammer down. Also, the track variety adds to the realism, there are some serious hills in Lotus and as you hit the descents your speedo creeps up as gravity aids the efforts of the 4 cylinder engine. The same is true of uphill climbs, if you're flat out and you hit a steep incline you'll hear the engine note drop a tone or two which is probably just as well because you can't see over the brow of the hill so you don't want to meet whatever could be there at maximum velocity! In true British style there are random roadworks about so don't be surprised to hit the summit and suddenly have to swerve because your lane has been closed off by traffic cone man.

Overall Lotus is a serious contender for Outrun's crown. It may lack a few touches of the champ such as the good looking seat cover and the flashy crash animations but this is forgiven by the fact that the game is supremely fast. Combine this with the fact that it's a good ole British Sports car and some of the game is set right here in Blighty and you have a package that should appeal to all patriotic illegal road racers out there!



4/5

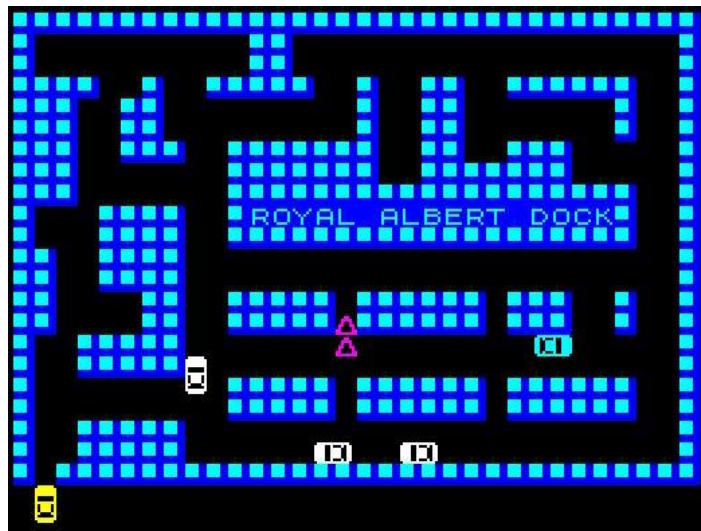
ugvm

Silver Award



Run Baby Run

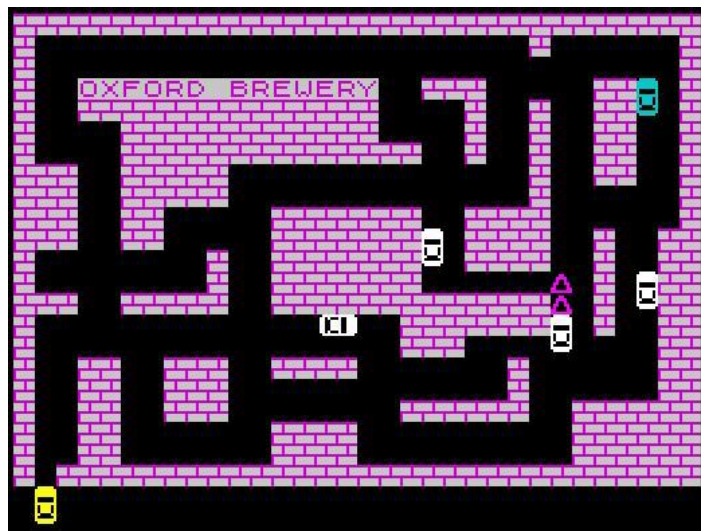
Nee-naw! Nee-naw!
deKay takes on the law,
 bizatches!



Imagine my surprise when I played this game, written mostly in BASIC, with no title screen to speak of, and awful blocky character-square graphics - and then continued to play it for almost 20 years.

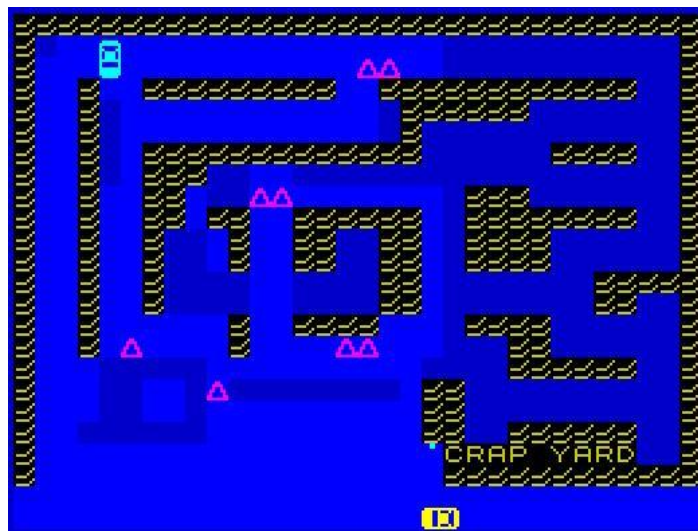
Not in one go of course. Now, most people will agree that the best games are simple. Explain Command and Conquer then, Or Halo. Or Premier Manager. Or Tomb Raider. They're hardly 'simple', are they? Run Baby Run is very simple. And very very good indeed.

On the run from the pigs (no, not the pink things with curly tails), you must stay uncaught for as long as possible. Following your car are six panda cars (no, not the black and white bears that eat bamboo), which trace your every turn through each of the single screen locations. The idea is to make them crash into each other, which is made easier because of the way in which you are followed. You turn left, and the car a few seconds behind you follows your



trail and turns left too. As does the one a few seconds behind him, and so on. Double-back over your own trail, and so do they. Can you see how you win now?

Once you've managed to bump them all off, and avoided the wreckage (some flashing red triangles, obviously) then a final cop car goes nuts with a rocket



launcher and drives along the bottom of the screen wiping out the level scenery. And you, if you're not careful. Avoid him, and his pixel-sized missiles of doom, and get to the bottom of the screen, and you win an all-expenses paid trip to the next level, but much faster.

I told you it was simple. You only have two keys to control it too. Well, you actually have three (left, right and brake), but why on earth would you want to brake? Stopping is the only thing the police cars don't copy from you, so if you stop, they catch up.

Run Baby Run scores highly for several reasons. Yes, it is lacking in both graphics and sound (even for the Spectrum both are very poor) but it has a 'get right in there' possibility helped by the simple controls and premise, and also has addictiveness in spades. Each level has its own intricacies, its own ideal routes and spots to avoid. You really cannot get bored of this game, and there hasn't been a game like it since.

5/5

ugvm

Gold Award



Columns

Jambo81 wrangles with a particularly highbrow broadsheet.

Most continuous (that is, keep going until you lose) puzzle games are, frankly, boring, and I tend to put the game down even before I've eventually lost it. However, Columns is different. It's pretty complex, and yet instantly accessible, and I still don't think I've worked out the best way to play it, despite over 20 hours of solid block dropping.

In case you don't know how it works, stacks of three coloured blocks drop from the top of the screen. You move them as they fall, à la Tetris, but instead of rotating, you rearrange the order of the vertical stacking. The intention is to make three or more blocks of the same colour connect in a straight line, vertically, horizontally or diagonally. They then disappear, and the blocks above (if any) fall down into their place. If they connect with others, they can also disappear, causing a "chain reaction".



Doesn't sound complicated? Well it is and it isn't. It's easy to make a line, but avoiding having the blocks pile up until you lose isn't. You begin to formulate strategies for future blocks, instead of just concentrating on the ones currently dropping. You set up opportunities and contingency plans. You pray for the rare magic block that will make all blocks of a chosen colour disappear.

There are two player modes, but they don't add much to the game. Columns is a slow, thoughtful game, and just seems to be boring if you try to play against someone else. It's best played while listening to music as something to occupy your eyes and hands, but don't let that put you off if you're not particularly into music.

To summarise: puzzle games bad, but Columns good.



Spindizzy

Tim Miller's spinning around, get out of his way...

Super Monkey Ball is said to be an offshoot of Marble Madness. It's not, really - if you want an offshoot, you want Spindizzy.

You play as a gyroscope, or an inverted pyramid, or something equally improbable. You must collect crystals. You do this by moving around the levels and not falling off the edge. Why? Oh, don't ask silly questions.

The game is shown from an isometric viewpoint, which can be viewed from the four corners - a handy feature on some of the screens. If you go off of any one side, you appear in a new room, often with a new colour scheme. You're well advised not to go too fast off the side, though, as it's possible there's a long drop ahead of you ...

And its these drops and surprises which make the game. You often have to build up speed to make a jump, and slow down on the other side. Crystals are rarely easy to get to, and more often than not you'll be risking a drop to get one, knowing that if you do drop you'll not finish the game in time.

It's doubtful that many people did finish the game, in fact. It's very hard indeed, and while you'll find new crystals constantly, getting those ones *and* the ones you found before will prove almost impossible. After a little while it gets frustrating, and eventually you won't be bothered any more.

It's fun while it lasts.

3/5

31



Wings

OJLim wonders if he's wandered into a commercial with Claire Raynor.

There was at least one person in ugv* who was saddened by the news that Wings Advance on the GBA was delayed until late-2003. That person in question being me.

Wings is a WWI dogfighting game. However, rather than bothering with the technicalities of flying planes which puts most people off flying simulations, Wings dispenses with all of that and throws you right into the action. The Amiga, with its stick-and-one-button controller, meant that the only controls you had to worry about were move up/down/left/right and shoot. There was no map system, but you didn't need one; your pilot's head would simply turn to the direction where the enemy planes were and you would know. Simple and effective.

At first, the missions generally involve you going out with some of your squadron to take out some German planes. As the game goes along, new missions are thrown in for good measure: balloon-fighting missions are introduced with dangerous ground artillery attacking you (one direct shot and you're as good as dead). Some missions involve you protecting bomber planes; later on, you are left alone to face a surprise attack by several German planes. All nerve-racking. In addition, overhead bombing missions and isometric-view strafing missions are thrown in to add variety and, while fairly entertaining, they are mostly far too easy and don't exude the same fun-factor as the main dog-fighting missions.

It's hard to pinpoint what makes this game so damn fun, but once you've shot down your first enemy plane, you're hooked. A table appears after each mission of the top pilots, and so you can compare your plane tally to the greats of the WWI. So many

emotions are felt playing Wings. Panic as you realise that the rest of your flight squad has been shot down and you're left to fight five enemy planes alone. Relief as you manage to land your plane after your engines are shot out. Agony as you see your pilot that shot 25 planes down plummet to death. Curse as your guns get jammed for the upteenth time. Be prepared to do the latter a lot, as in the later missions (and there are 250 in total) the game cheats in making the game difficult by jamming your guns every two minutes or so.



Graphically, Wings was pretty impressive for the Amiga. Each level was a big 3D, seemingly free-roaming world. Admittedly, the landscapes were not that impressive, but when you're trying to shoot down a plane, who's noticing? The menu music is excellent - there's at least one song that will have you humming along in about 10 seconds. The presentation was excellent too, with the menus having a nice old brownish look to it and each mission prefaced by a line of dialogue shown in the style of silent films. Additionally, should your pilot die in the game, you just have to create a new pilot, earn your Wings (basically play through a simple mission in which you earn the right to fly a plane) and continue from where your last pilot died.

Probably the only negative point about the game is the long loading times between missions. And I mean loooooong. Additionally, for those who wanted to fly for Germany... well, you can't (although apparently this has been fixed for the GBA remake). Apart from that, Wings really is gaming at its finest. Even better, the Amiga disk image is available free from the Cinemaware page, so everyone can enjoy Wings while the GBA version remains in limbo.



Blurred Vision

deKay squints a bit at the Quickshot Supervision - a Gameboy wannabe.



In 1992, the Quickshot Supervision was unleashed on the UK. Also that year, assorted other 'brands' of the Watara-made Supervision were released across the world. It looked like a Gameboy, smelt like a Gameboy, and even had similar hardware specs to the Gameboy. It was cheaper, and had cheaper games than the Gameboy. It flopped, and within the year had practically vanished. I own one.

Admittedly, I got it a couple of years ago in L@@K MINT R@RE condition from a secondhand shop for an obscenely low number of pence and not when it came out. From the five games I got with it (out of almost 70 in total), it is easy to see why the Supervision is no longer with us.

Backing up just a little, it is worth noting the similarities and differences between the GB and the Supervision. They have the same shape (although the UK Supervision could bend in the middle to tilt the screen), have the same button layout and a similar

greenish mono 4-shade LCD screen. They take games on similar sized carts, and both need 4 AA batteries and have a multi-unit link port. The Supervision has a 4MHz 65C02 CPU (similar to that found in a C64 or NES), and the GB has a 4MHz Z80-alike (similar to the Spectrum CPU). Soundwise, the GB lacks one of the DMA channels of the Supervision, and the screen on the latter is 160x160 pixels - just larger than the Gameboy's 160x144. All in all, they're pretty evenly matched, so why did one succeed and the other fail?

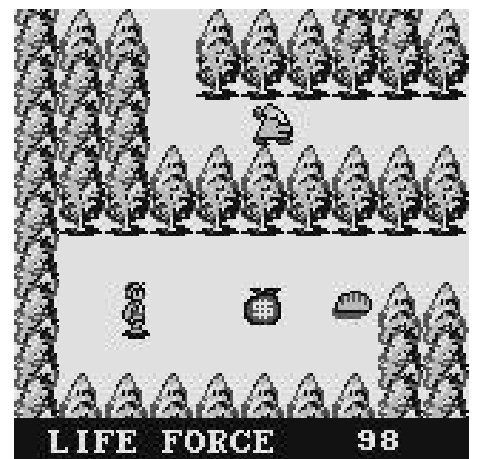


P52 Sea Battle

The main reason was quality. Invariably, Supervision games were crap. There were no big name games at all, and the best you could expect was a poor clone of another type of game. For example, the bundled game was Crystball - a Breakout clone. Compare that to the Gameboy's World-conquering Tetris. There was no proper third party support either, so while the GB enjoyed games by Ocean, THQ, Capcom, Konami, and so on, the Supervision was left with cheap bedroom-coder rubbish. It wasn't just the games that were of low quality either. So that the Supervision could be sold at a low price (about £40 when the Gameboy was £80, and games for

£10 vs £30) corners were obviously cut. The joypad was terrible, and the screen suffered from awful motion blur, making some games (including Crystball) difficult to see. And you thought the GB had a blurred screen! Also note that the Gameboy had already been out for three years by the time the Supervision was released. This no doubt affected its position too.

One advantage the Supervision had over the Gameboy was the availability of the "TV-Link" add-on. This allowed you to play your games on a TV set - something you couldn't do with the Gameboy (well, not without expensive and generally unavailable-to-the-public gizmos) until the Super Gameboy came out, and even then you still needed a SNES to use it on! The TV-Link even translated the monochrome colours of the games to 4 different colours, similar to the Super Gameboy did.



Delta Hero

Overall, it is clear that the Supervision was a bad idea. Maybe if it was a few years earlier, and had some more money-muscle behind it to throw at some games developers we'd have seen a different picture today. As it was, it made more of a wet plop on the Videogaming map, than an all-out assault.

Seaman Diary (part 3)

Last time, **Rev. Owen Allaway** had left his Gillmen without food. Their survival may depend on whether or not he buys another VMU. The saga continues...

Tuesday Evening

I have not bought a VMU. My Gillmen are complaining that they're hungry.

I switch to the moth tank. There are two moths. The first time one flutters towards me I pretty much jump out of my skin. But I stay and watch them for a long time. They look beautiful (except for the faces). If I don't get food soon, this may be the last time I see them for a while.

In my desperation I drop a moth into the tank. It lies on the surface, flutters a little and goes still. Great, I wasted a moth.

Back in the tank I look closely and notice there are two eggs in the moth cage. Could this be a lifeline? Before they hatch I spy movement in the back of the tank. I zoom in. I have a spider. Is this new creature friend or foe? An essential part of the ecosystem or a mere predator? The creepiest moment in Seaman so far is when the spider starts running straight towards me. Shudder.

Checking back an hour or so later I notice there is one larva in the cage, and no eggs. Where did the other egg go? I suspect the spider, but without proof I feel unable to convict him. But I have a larva and without further ado I snatch him up and drop him in the tank. Sushi swims over and chomps him. Some falls from his mouth and Idiot Brother eats it up. Disaster has been averted...for now.

Now he's been fed, Sushi is very chatty. He asks whether I'm married, have kids, live alone, etc.

Then he asks about my Dad.

After giving him all the info he puts on an evil villain voice and says, "My knowledge of you and your family is becoming ever more complete." After asking about my mother he puts on the same voice and says, "Ah, it's all starting to make sense." I'm starting to think that I should unplug my modem while visiting Seaman.

Eventually Sushi runs out of things to say. For no real reason I say "crap" into the microphone. Sushi says, "I'm beginning to understand you better", and flings a huge lump of Seaman poo out of his tentacle right at me. Luckily it hits the glass of the tank, and not me. I can't get him to repeat the trick and eventually he gets annoyed with me and swims off.

No source of food in moth cage yet.



Wednesday Morning

Two more eggs in the moth cage! And the Gillmen aren't hungry! Praise be to The Holy Code Of Vivarium! The spider has spun a web. Both eggs must survive. One to feed the Gillmen tonight and one to grow into a moth to produce more food. The spider gets dropped

into the tank. He sinks to the bottom. The Gillmen ignore him. Leonard has told me to expect a change in how the Gillmen look today. I'm excited.

After this I check the newsgroups and read a 'Seaman Hint' message. It says to *never* feed spiders to your Seamen. Oops. Well, they didn't eat it. Maybe I'll be okay. Maybe. I don't want to start all over from the beginning, but if I had to I'd do it in a heartbeat.

Wednesday Evening

The moth cage is coming along nicely. I have a couple of larvae, a moth and two eggs. Looks like things are going to be okay there. Sushi and Idiot Brother are complaining of hunger. I now have one larva, a moth and two eggs.

My Gillmen are changing, as Leonard told me they would. The front fins have changed shape, becoming flatter and longer. Two little legs have sprouted towards the rear. I am watching evolution take place. I am also watching my Gillmen use their new-found limbs to swim backwards. Useful...

Sushi asks me whether I like myself.

"Yes."

"I bet you do. I bet you like yourself at least twice a day." (Smirk.)

After a little speech Sushi asks me another question. The phone rings so I press Start to pause. It's someone asking me if I want to change long-distance phone companies. After he does not take no for an answer three times I hang

up during the middle of one of his speeches. It is the first time I have ever hung up on someone while they are talking. I'm quite proud of myself. Sushi isn't. I interrupted his question and now he is in a huff and will not speak to me, except to tell me that he's not talking to me...

...After getting back from the pub (four Guinness, one cottage pie, one episode of Survivor) I return to the tank. Sushi is talking to me again and today seems to be psyche evaluation day. Sushi keeps asking me more questions. Do I think other people like me? Do I consider myself attractive? And more. After each answer he tells me what a nice person I am, which is odd seeing as he seems to hate me most of the time. I can't figure him out.



Another spider has invaded the moth cage. I leave him be, though there is only one egg left. I think that maybe the spider will play an important role in keeping the numbers in the cage down - if he wasn't there I may have more moths and larvae than the plant in the cage could support. After the larvae chomp on it, it looks very threadbare but seems to recover overnight. But could it reach a stage where so much has been eaten away that it would die?

Thursday Morning

Gillmen with legs are no longer Gillmen. But I cannot understand what Leonard calls them. Oddfish? Podfish? Something like that. Until I work out what he's saying I'll just call them Seamen. Leonard also says that I need to prepare to drain

the tank as the Seamen will soon need to live on land. How do I do that? Another worry. My Seamen's back legs have got a lot stronger overnight and the area round Sushi's face seems to have changed colour.

I do the usual maintenance. Air, heat, food, spray. I sit down and watch Sushi for a bit. It's one of those "can't get off the sofa and get to work" moments. Sushi turns to the camera. "Let's get it on," he says. Idiot Brother swims over Sushi. They lock their tentacles against each other. "This isn't the Spice Channel, you should look away." I keep watching. Something pulses through the tentacles, travelling from Idiot Brother to Sushi. Is Sushi sucking, or is Idiot Brother blowing? It may be best that I don't know. Eventually they stop. "You've no idea how much of a relief that is," Sushi says happily. Idiot Brother lies on his side and floats up towards the top of the tank. Oh dear. Is he dead, or is this just a case of post-coital unconsciousness? I'll find out this evening, but I'm guessing the former.

Thursday Evening

Idiot Brother gave his all to ensure the survival of the species, Leonard tells me. He also tells me to try and move the big rock, though I won't be able to do it alone. Rocks? He's thinking about rocks in this time of grief? The man has no emotions, I tell you...

The moth cage is teeming with life. It's a wonderful sight. Sushi's back legs are now much bigger and look like frog legs - if Lou Ferrigno was playing the frog.

While turning up the heat in Sushi's tank I hear Idiot Brother's cry of 'yay!' Is this the ghost of idiot brother? Is Sushi doing a cruel impression of his dead sibling (and mate)? Was it Sushi all along? I seem to be detecting previously unheard elements of sarcasm in

the cry.

I don't try to talk much to Sushi. He asks me a bit about computers and I answer, but I'm more concerned with moving the rock. I grab it and start rocking it. Sushi says he'll help move it if I can answer a riddle. Eventually I get one right (he seems to understand me perfectly when I answer these) and gets down on his back legs and starts pushing the rock with his front fins. For a brief but bizarre moment I am reminded of Lara Croft. The rock moves. But not much. Sushi is tired so I wait until he is rested before we try again.

"What do you get if you put a cat in a fish bowl?" Ah, this one's easy. The rock moves a bit more. After four pushes nothing much has happened and Sushi is exhausted. "Ooh, my back," he says.

So I wander off for a while, meet some new people and fight some monsters. Hang on, no, that's Chrono Cross. Anyway, I return to the tank about two and a half hours after I left and Sushi is still knackered. I make sure everything's set up for the night and go to bed.

Friday Morning

I adjust the heat, oxygen and spray and feed Sushi one of the many larvae that I now have. Then I start trying to move the rock. He ignores it and asks me about the Internet.

Eventually, he seems to notice that I'm pulling on the rock and comes down to help. His final question that I have to get right? "Is there life after death?" My answer satisfies him and the rock moves a little more. The water starts draining from the tank, eventually leaving only one small pool over to the right of the tank. Sushi swims over and stays in the pool, but jumps out as does back flips every now and again. I leave him to it.

More next issue!

My Top 5...

This issue's first Top 5 is brought to you by **Rev. Owen Allaway**, with his Top Five Inexplicably Popular Games

5 **Fallout (PC)**

If I wanted to aimlessly wander around a dingy dystopia, killing rats and wondering what the hell I should be doing I'd move back to Birmingham, thanks very much.

3 **The Sims (PC)**

I'm not alone in hating this, I know. But a lot of people like it. Why? It's the single most annoying thing in the world ever. "Look! If you're bored just turn on the radio! Don't make me tell you to! And I've given you a bloody toilet! It's right there! It's right... oh dear God. Now who's going to clean that up, eh?"

2 **Pro Evolution Soccer (PS2)**

There's no flow, no quick response. You choose what to do and then wait for the movement to finish before you can choose a new action. It's the only turn-based football game I've ever played and I don't like it. Maybe it is more realistic, but if realism means swearing at the screen while waiting for my player to finish an animation before I can change direction, I'll take FIFA please.

4 **Uplink (PC)**

Everyone says it's great. But I could never get it installed. So I hate it. I'm a small, petty man in many ways.



1 **Deus Ex (PC)**

It's so close to being brilliant. But the way it fools you into thinking you're free to play the character you wish



before taking away all your freedom is unforgivable. For the first few hours, it's wonderful. You can play how you want, following or disobeying orders as you see fit. Well, that's how it seemed to me.

Then you get to a section where you're forced to take a certain path and do something the character I was playing would never do. It's the initial illusion of freedom that makes me hate it so. If it had never tried to fool me into thinking I was in control I could have played through it quite happily, instead of getting disgusted with it and never playing it again.

My Top 5...

Halo informs us of his Top 5 consoles

5 Sega GameGear

While it sucked batteries more than a blind vampire fixing his car and the console's screen was not quite right at any angle, it was still a great system. A Master System mini.



4 Nintendo Gameboy

As a fan of the Gameboy with over 30 games, it's not unlikely that I will sing it's praises. While the original was a battery-sucking monster with a dodgy screen the Gameboy Pocket was a lovely that shouldn't be missed.



3 Nintendo SuperNES

The SNES was a classic piece of gaming history with revolutionary games such as StarWing (StarFox in the US) and Mario World. Not as popular in the UK as the Megadrive, which in a way is a shame even though I prefer the Megadrive's games.



2 Sega Saturn

Brilliant console - I enjoy this black brick more than my Playstation. Manx TT, Daytona USA (Game over, yeah!) and NiGHTS are all more fun than I have had on my Playstation, and for less than a tenth of the price.



1 Sega Megadrive

A classic released back in 1989 which revolutionised gaming as we know it, as it meant that Nintendo had some competition against the Super NES (although that came a little later).. The games industry wouldn't be the same without it.



Letters

We all love getting letters, don't we? It makes us feel wanted and loved. Whoever has the address "hahaha@sexyfun.net" obviously loves our Editor very much, then.

Ultimate Sniper

Dear **ugvm**,
Why oh why did Wal-Mart of America in reaction to the recent sniper atrocities withdraw video games like Tribes yet keep books like "The Ultimate Sniper: An Advanced Training Manual for Military and Police Snipers" and many others in their catalogue?
distant, via email

*Because everyone knows that videogames are evil, and books can't hurt you. Anyway "distant" (or should we call you "Panimu"?) - we now know you read **ugvm**. See last issue's letters, readers! **Ed.***

A Wonderful Device

Dear Editor,
I have heard rumours about a wonderful device from Datel that will enable my Nintendo Gamecube to play multiformat games. I believe this device is called the Freeloader and will retail for £19.99. Is this true?
Yours, Ian Osbourne.
"Ian Osbourne", via email

*Yes, Mike Lowe^W^WIan, there is such a device. It won't let you play multi-format games though, just games from other regions. It'll be out "Real Soon Now". **Ed.***

Popular Television Show

Dear **ugvm**,
Thankyou for producing an excellent magazine, which I always

read between takes on the popular television show Buffy The Vampire Slayer. I especially like the Seaman Diary, which is easily the best part. Regards,
Alyson Hannigan, via email

*You can't fool us, Rev. Plugging your own work, and pretending to be someone else? You'll burn in hell, mark my works. **Ed.***

Get A Female

I liked the article called "A Rough Guide to Videogames", even if it is a bit close to a trademark! The method is an OK one, but I'm not too sure about the choice of games. I wonder if Tim's ever tried to get a female non-gamer interested - if he had, I'd have expected him to be using games like Mr Driller and Bust a Move a lot more. And where was Samba de Amigo? That'll get almost anyone interested!
Mark Boynton, via email

*Tim is always trying to get females (non-gamers or otherwise) interested. Which is why he's into Hello Kitty. **Ed.***

Naïve Female Japanese

I am shocked and saddened by the slur on my name that was printed in your so-called magazine last issue. I should like to take this opportunity to clear my name. Please make clear that the following points are understood:
1) I do not own, and have never owned, any piece of "Hello Kitty" merchandise;
2) The implication that I use said merchandise to chat up naïve female Japanese students has no foundation in reality; and
3) Hello Kitty is not to be dissed.
Oh, and what is a computer monitor if it's not a "text-to-light converting device"? Eh?
I remain, etc etc,
Tim Miller, via internal email

*So what's that on your desk then? Scotch mist? **Ed.***

Grey Monday Morning

Just a quick email to say well done to you and the boys for providing me with a distraction from the shite weather on a grey Monday morning. Top notch work.
Jim Hughes, via email

*Work? You mean this is work?! We're not even getting paid. Not even by Datel. **Ed.***

Some Gamers Moan

Playing Sonic Adventure 2 recently got me thinking about game longevity and save points. I had switched the game off mid-level after it had frustrated me for the last time that night safe in the knowledge that I could start again from where I had got to when I had calmed down. Some gamers moan about how short some games are, just think how short and easy the original Sonic would be if you could save after every level, you'd have it licked with all the emeralds in no time - and I remember paying a similar price for it then as games cost now. Would you consider playing a recent game all the way through in one sitting? Some might, but it would be a very long haul for some games.

One of my favourite Megadrive games was DecapAttack - I recall playing that right through to the final boss in one sitting and then losing all my lives and continues on that one boss. The thought of having to start the game again from the beginning was too much and I never did complete it. With save points it would have been very easy to complete and would have been a very short game as well.

Maybe next time you sit down to play a platform/adventure game, take the memory card out and see how you get on!

John Talbot, via email

In an ideal world, we wouldn't have to play games at all. We'd have robots to do that for us, giving us more free time to do what we want to do, like, erm, stuff and things. I

remember DecapAttack too, but have you played the Japanese original - "Magical Flying Hat Turbo Adventure"? It's even harder, and you have no energy bar. One hit, and you die. **Ed.**

Plan On Producing

A letter for the letters page:

"How often do you plan on producing ugvm, monthly, bi-monthly, etc?"

Except I suggest you lie and stick a fake name on it.

Jim Taylor, via email

I forgot to, Jim. Sorry. Oh, and to answer your question, ugvm comes out every so many weeks. Sometimes it's more often. Sometimes less so. Ed.

Move Their Left Hand

Dear **ugvm**,

I really enjoyed Tim's Rough Guide to Games in issue 2. For people like mewho lack his patience and his game collection, here's my tried and tested way of getting a friend into games...

1. Sit down with them on couch and position Doritos and beer/lemonade within easy reach.
2. Give them N64 controller.
3. Gently move their left hand onto the centre prong. Don't give them any instructions.
4. Place Mario 64 cartridge into N64.
5. Turn on TV and N64. Choose a new game.
6. Suggest they have a look around.
7. Find some reason to leave the room for a while. Locking the door is optional.
8. Return after 15 minutes. Your friend should now be happily trotting around, climbing trees, falling down waterfalls and looking curiously at that castle in the distance. The journey has begun..

ard, via email

Then, when they're just about to complete the game, rip the cartridge out and stamp on it.

Mwa-ha-haaaaaaa! Or is that just me? Ed.

Download Pr0n

Things to do while Spectrum games load:

The 80's: (when I was ickle)

- 5) School work
- 4) Go in garden
- 3) Watch TV, 4 channels, not much choice!
- 2) Lego!
- 1) Food; breakfast or dinner in particular.

What we might do now if we had to wait:

- 5) complain (more than we used to)
- 4) Download Pr0n*
- 3) Get another coke
- 2) Download Mp3's
- 1) Chat on UVGM

*a suggestion, not a confession

Chris Marshall, via email

I find myself playing quick-to-load games whilst waiting for slow-to-load games to load. Remember those old games which had games you could play while they were loading? Deviants and Joe Blade III were two of them, I think. You don't see that nowadays, do you? Damn lazy programmers. Ed.

A Bit Serious

Dear Ed,

Could you tone down your editorial replies to letters? It's just they seem kind of opinionated - how do you know if your opinion reflects the general opinion of the UGVM contributors? Editorial replies are generally to back up or make clear the magazine's stance on an issue. Sorry if this all sounds a bit serious - boing! There, it's all fun and games now.

Jambo81, via email

Ah, but all the replies are by me, not some kind of bizarre multi-headed Cabal. Anyway, they're hardly that opinionated, and if they are, they're my opinions. Tim - we've got a live one here! Ed.
Not for long! Tim

ugvm

needs YOU!

ugvm is written by the people, for the people. It can only succeed if you make it happen. We need you, We really, really need you. We really do. No, *really*. Honest.

You can help us by providing. Providing articles. Reviews. Features. Comments. Letters. Suggestions. Raindrops on roses. Whiskers on kittens*. Bright copper kettles. Warm woollen mittens.

The magazine is what you make it. If you send it in, we can edit it, print it, and maybe even credit you with it! Great, huh?

Here's what you do. Type up your submission, and send it to editor@ugvm.org.uk. Make sure it's all in plain text (so Notepad or Simpletext are good choices to type it into). If you're doing a review, then please read the guidelines on www.ugvm.org.uk before submitting it. If it's a letter, mark the subject of the email as Letters.

All fairly obvious really. The only thing we ask, and this is a legal thing and so quite important, is that the work is your own, and you are not just cut-and-pasting some review or article from another website or magazine.

As always, we the **ugvm** staff can be found in the newsgroup uk.games.video.misc, so you're free to talk to us there.

Please give generously.

* anyone found actually trying to email us some kittens with whiskers on will be shot. Same goes for cream coloured ponies. This isn't Animal Hospital, you know.

Hold The Back Page

I wonder what the "youth of today" would make of some of the games reviewed this issue. How many of them would simply sneer at the graphics and sound? My younger brother always used to have a problem with black and white TV programmes and films. "It's crap!" he'd say, "It's in black and white!" being his only argument to back up the point. Schindler's List was in black and white - is that crap? Hancock's Half Hour was black and white - does that make it less funny? Radio was even worse: "There's no pictures!" he'd moan.

How many of these "kids" realise that Super Mario Advance 3: Yoshi's Island on the Gameboy Advance is a 7 year old SNES game? Or that Speedball 2 or the forthcoming Wings are old Amiga classics? I have seen a boy, who could not be more than 10 years old, in Game asking his mum for a copy of Manic Miner, which is almost twice as old as he is! Do they even know what an Amiga or a Spectrum is? In many cases, I doubt it.

Maybe not knowing these facts will help shift a few more updates and remakes of old games. If you told a 10-year-old that the game he wants to buy is 10 years old, I suspect he would put it back on the shelf. To you and I, the long-term gamesplayer, we'd buy the game for that reason. Personally, I'm waiting in earnest for the long overdue Sensible Soccer update - I just hope they don't break it in the process.

Having said all that, progress is good. It's nice to look back on yesterday's games sometimes (and I still enjoy the odd game of Run Baby Run, of course), but I'd never swap the new for the old. If we were to do that, we'd have no Mario Sunshine, no Halo, no Timesplitters 2, and no Final Fantasy XXIII (or whatever they're up to now). Imagine that. We might as well live in black and white.

deKay

Next Issue in **ugvm**

Out with the old...

Things go back to normal next issue, with things returning closer to the present.

...in with the old

As from Issue 04, we'll have a regular Retro section in the magazine!

More great reviews

Including Knight Rider, Timesplitters 2 and Doshin the Giant.

More great features

Another Life Of..., and more secret but interesting articles!

More regulars

News, My Top 5..., Seaman Diary, Letters and Editorial.

More Freeloader

Or not.

Back Issues

An archive of previous issues of **ugvm** is available on the **ugvm** website!

<http://www.ugvm.org.uk/>

Also check out the Reviews Index, with full scores of every game we've reviewed, in a database that's sortable and filterable.

Stats-fanatics can even find average scores per issue, platform or even reviewer. It's almost a game in itself!